PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 115

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1986-87

COMPRISING PERIOD
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27 April 1987

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 115

ELEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1986-87

House of Commons

Monday 27 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of the right hon. John Ernest Silkin, esquire, Member for Lewisham, Deptford, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss that we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the right hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): On 12 March 1987 the total numbers of unemployed claimants in Newport, Gwent and Wales were 9,524, 26,782 and 166,000 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate than many thousands have been out of work for two years or more—approximately 1,400 in Newport, East? Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that people are being bullied off the register, that schemes are introduced which mean no real jobs, and that there have been 19 changes in the method of compiling the statistics? Is it not time that a stop was put to that fiddling and that the Government introduced suitable economic policies that will produce real jobs for our people?

Mr. Edwards: The rate of long-term unemployment has been falling more rapidly in Wales than in the rest of the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman talks about real jobs. I am sure that he will have welcomed the announcement by Plessey on 15 April that it will expand its operations in Newport to create 137 jobs, the announcement by LRC Products today that it will create 110 jobs in Llanelli, and other announcements this April. Diversified Products announced 125 jobs in Gorseinon, Pulse Computers 30 jobs in Newport, Sebastian International 127 jobs at Bridgend, Graphaprint 100 jobs in Deeside, Action Express Packaging 30 jobs in Kenfig Hill, Brother Industries 191 jobs in Wrexham, Microloom 111 jobs in Swansea, and Anglo Swedish Homes 59 jobs in Port Talbot. If that is fiddling the figures, I am delighted to announce them to the House as real jobs.

Sir Anthony Meyer: One feels a certain sympathy for the Labour party in its plight, but is there not something embarrassing about its attempt to extract bad capital from the crop of consistently good news that now comes every day from Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I entirely agree. We have seen the headline total down by 18,200 over the year and we have seen seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales fall for 10 consecutive months and for 11 out of the past 12 months. That is good news. I am surprised that it causes misery on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Can the Secretary of State tell the House what are the latest developments in the worst unemployment black spot in Wales, the Teifi valley?

Mr. Edwards: In the Teifi valley, as in every other travel-to-work area in Wales, unemployment has fallen over the past 12 months. I am confident that the

unemployment figures will continue to improve. I say that because of the confidence being expressed by business and industry generally in Wales.

Mr. Harvey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the provision of 200 jobs by Brother Industries in Wrexham represents just the latest in a staggering record of achievements in reducing unemployment over the past six months? Will my right hon. Friend encourage further industries to move to that corner of north-east Wales?

Mr. Edwards: The truth is that that corner of north-east Wales is proving to be one of the most attractive industrial locations in the whole of Britain. It has attracted a considerable amount of overseas investment. The number of jobs there has grown substantially during our term in office. I am particularly struck by the number of projects that are being negotiated currently there and elsewhere in Wales.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Does the Secretary of State accept that, of course, we welcome all new job announcements in Wales, whether from multinational companies, from within Wales or from the public sector? Our concern is the context in which those announcements are made. Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that he has to set the job gains against the 150,000 jobs that have been destroyed since he took office as Secretary of State for Wales? That is what his successor as the candidate in the county of Pembrokeshire will be answerable for to the electorate now that the right hon. Gentleman is to retire.

Mr. Edwards: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman, unlike the spokesman for the Labour party, has welcomed the good news. Of course we have suffered from high levels of unemployment in Wales. Indeed, Wales has suffered from the decline of the old basic industries for generations. However, I believe that we have now come to the end of that process and have a strengthening and broadening Welsh economy. I should have thought that both sides of the House would welcome the series of consistently good figures that have been emerging for at least a year in Wales.

Mr. Dickens: Is it not a fact that, historically, there has always been high unemployment in the valleys of Wales? Is it not also a fact that no Government have done more to produce jobs and small businesses in Wales than have this Conservative Government?

Mr. Edwards: All I can say—it is an absolute fact—is that unemployment has fallen more rapidly and for a longer period in Wales than in any other region of the United Kingdom and that the relative position of Wales in the unemployment tables has improved markedly during the past 12 months. I am confident that that process will continue.

"Housing for Senior Management"

2. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received in response to his Department's circular 30/86 entitled "Housing for Senior Management."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): Forty four local authorities responded to the circular, and 14 other organisations and individuals made representations.

Mr. Wardell: In view of the fact that the circular is to be inflicted on the people of Wales, but not on the people of England, will the Under-Secretary of State accept that it will undermine the entire planning process? Does he further accept that an overwhelming body of people in Wales are against the circular, and will he arrange to withdraw it as soon as he can?

Mr. Robinson: The answer to the last question is no. I stress that the circular is concerned only with sites for individually designed single, new houses or low-density groups of houses in attractive locations commanding the privacy and space that executives in business and industry expect, and can often find elsewhere. I find it hard to believe that that could in any way undermine planning policies in Wales.

Sir Raymond Gower: Will my hon. Friend make it clear that that will not mean the abandonment of sound planning principles, but is merely an additional consideration that planning authorities should have in mind in their aim of creating new jobs in the Principality?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Delyn Enterprise Zone

3. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total number of new jobs created in the Delyn enterprise zone since it came into operation on 21 July 1983.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Between 21 July 1983 and 30 March 1987 a total of 1,155 new jobs have been created in the Delyn enterprise zone.

Mr. Raffan: I thank my right hon. Friend for that most encouraging figure. Does he agree that the continued dramatic success of the Delyn enterprise zone, which has been largely responsible for the 13 per cent. drop in Delyn's unemployment figures during the past year, would be threatened by the return to power of the Labour party, which has shown nothing but outright hostility to the concept of enterprise zones?

Mr. Edwards: I agree entirely. It is notable that 85 per cent. of the 2,000 jobs in the zone are in manufacturing and that 55 per cent. are full-time jobs for males. It is equally encouraging to see the success of the neighbouring green field business park, which has attracted companies such as Breger and Gibson, Huurral and Christie Tyler.

Welsh Development Agency

7. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total square footage of factories built by the Welsh Development Agency since May 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The WDA has completed more than 9·7 million sq ft of factory floor space since May 1979.

Mr. Knox: Can my right hon. Friend say what the average square footage of factory space produced by the agency has been since the present Government came into power, and how that compares with the figure under the previous Labour Government?

Mr. Edwards: Between January 1976 and March 1979 the agency completed 1·5 million sq ft—an average of 0·5 million sq ft per year. Under this Government there has

been an average of 1·2 million sq ft per year, which is more than double the rate under the previous Labour Government. However, perhaps even more important has been the record level at which those factories have been occupied. The allocation rate is currently running at an all-time high.

Mr. Foot: We greatly welcome the Secretary of State's conversion to support for the Welsh Development Agency. We only wish that he had given that enthusiastic support from the beginning. What will be the real expansion in the money that is to be allocated to the Welsh Development Agency? The right hon. Gentleman must know that there are areas, such as mine, where we still have about 20 per cent. unemployment and are fighting as hard as we can against it. We need a considerable increase in the factory programme to enable us to attract more new industries into our areas, and I hope that we will get it from the right hon. Gentleman's successor.

Mr. Edwards: We have a far bigger factory programme than that of the previous Administration, so I do not need lectures on that from the right hon. Gentleman. The agency's total budget for 1987-88 is £86·5 million, and it is planning on the basis of £93 million gross being available for factory development over the next three financial years. It is remarkable that the agency allocated 2 million sq ft of factory space in the past financial year and 566,000 sq ft in the first three months of this year. Therefore, the pace of allocation is accelerating.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State look at the situation in Gwynedd in detail and observe that the WDA's three-year programme has virtually no investment programmes in factories, other than at Llandudno junction, although in places such as Holyhead and the Pwllheli area unemployment is between 20 and 25 per cent.? When will the WDA deliver the goods to those areas?

Mr. Edwards: I shall certainly look at those factors with the WDA, but by far the biggest contribution that has been or could be made to the economy of that area is the present road construction programme—the dualling of the A55 across north Wales and the work on the Conway crossing. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the improvement of those road links to the rest of Britain will make the biggest possible contribution to creating jobs in his area.

Mr. Barry Jones: The WDA has done well for Wales, and I remind the House that a Labour Government created it. The Secretary of State puts a complacent gloss on the record, bearing in mind that under his stewardship unemployment has doubled since 1979. Has he forgotten his 6,473 jobless constituents? Not for them the rich pickings of the City. The right hon. Gentleman should present his WDA plans to restore his constituents to work. Does he know that more than 4,000 of my constituents are jobless and that recent job losses announced at the Modo factory are a serious blow? Has the WDA any plans to intervene to help my shocked constituents? The work of the agency in Clwyd would be much easier if the Government would give the £750 million loan for the airbus. Why has there been no statement on that?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman draws attention to the loss of 50 or 60 jobs at Modo, but not to the 100 jobs created, for example, by Graphoprint on Deeside, which was the subject of my recent announcement, or the 100 jobs created at DRG Plastics, which were announced in March. Within one mile of DRG's new factory there are now nine foreign-owned companies employing about 1,400 people. In my constituency I have created an enterprise zone which already, in the short period of its history, has created more than 500 jobs. I greatly welcome the announcement made only this weekend of a major new ferry service operating from Pembroke dock to Ireland.

Privatisation

9. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the impact of Her Majesty's Government's privatisation policy on the economy of Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Privatisation, which is an essential part of the Government's policy of stimulating enterprise, has already proved of considerable benefit to the people of Wales.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Secretary of State think it ethical or desirable that Cabinet Ministers who make important decisions on privatisation should be allowed to buy shares in privatisation issues, as he did in British Telecom? What is his view of those of his colleagues who made multiple share applications?

Mr. Edwards: My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) has sadly wrecked his career by his action, but he should be remembered as well for his outstanding contribution to Ynys Môn as a constituency Member of Parliament. Like all Cabinet Ministers, all my investments are made without reference to me and at the complete discretion of my investment advisers.

Mr. Grist: If I may use a slightly different meaning of the word "privatisation", does my right hon. Friend appreciate that some Conservative Ministers are most disappointed that this has not gone further in Wales, in particular in freeing workers in local authorities and the National Health Service? Can we look for further action on this in the next Conservative Government?

Mr. Edwards: The answer to the final part of my hon. Friend's question is that he can look to further action. Indeed, we are already taking vigorous action in the Health Service. I have had recent discussions with the chairmen of a number of health authorities in Wales about carrying this action forward. I am glad to say that the health authority covering my hon. Friend's constituency is taking real and positive steps.

Mr. Barry Jones: If privatisation of the public services in Wales were ever to take place it would lead to the loss of at least 3,000 jobs in the very early years in which it was implemented. Is not the right hon. Gentleman's record since 1979 in Wales a ghastly one? Manufacturing investment is down, regional grants are down, transport jobs are down, mining jobs are down by 23,000 and metals and chemicals are down by 45 per cent. Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that his complacent policies have lost us 36 per cent. of our manufacturing jobs? To lose further jobs through privatisation would make the problems far worse. For these betrayals, the right hon. Gentleman should not be given a peerage to go back to the City, he should be sacked.

Mr. Edwards: I have seldom heard such nonsense. The truth of the matter is that every privatisation has greatly

improved the efficiency of the organisation. In Wales, for example, we have benefited from Amersham International, Associated British Ports and Allied Wire and Steel. I hope that in due course, the steel industry will return to the freedom of the private sector. The hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest that he would like to see the steel industry return to the over-manned, uncompetitive condition in which we inherited it from the Labour party. I am glad to say that today it is among the most competitive steel industries in Europe and that its future is assured by that fact.

Mr. Raffan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that privatisation by local authorities and health authorities has led not only to lower rates, which must be good for business and for jobs, but to better services, because money saved can be reallocated to areas of greatest need?

Mr. Edwards: That is true. If we get improved efficiency, we are able to provide better services for the same outlay. It seems quite incredible that spokesmen from the Labour party should argue against efficiency in the public services, yet that seems to be the case that they are to present to the people of Britain and of Wales.

Patients (Waiting Lists)

10. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what research his Department has made into the cost and effectiveness of appointments and waiting times for patients attending clinics at National Health Service hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information is not regularly collected centrally about cancellations of either in-patient or out-patient appointments. In surveys conducted in 1985 it was estimated that about 2 per cent. of out-patient clinics were cancelled by hospitals and that about 15 per cent. of new out-patients and 19 per cent. of follow-up out-patients did not attend for their appointments. The Welsh Office's waiting list team will be examining the impact of cancelled appointments on waiting lists during the course of its work over the next year.

Mr. Grist: Is my hon. Friend aware of the survey in south Glamorgan, which estimates that 1,000 patients a week do not turn up, that this is costing the University hospital of Wales £2 million a year, that having everyone ordered to turn up for 10 o'clock in the morning causes a loss of money and ill will among both medical staff and patients, and that something ought to be done about it?

Mr. Robinson: I realise the problems that such cancellations cause and the difficulty for those waiting for appointments. Responsibility for running an efficient appointments system rests with the district health authorities. As long ago as 1985 the Welsh Office asked authorities to validate their waiting lists. This should reduce non-attendance by eliminating those who no longer require treatment. As part of its work of disseminating good practice, the Department's waiting list team will be investigating further the procedures for health authorities in this regard.

Dr. Roger Thomas: Does the Minister agree that it is bad and inefficient when all the out-patients are sent for at one time, either at 10 o'clock in the morning or 2 o'clock in the afternoon? Will he ensure that his Department tells district health authorities that appointments should be staggered? That is one of the reasons why there are so many defaulters.

Mr. Robinson: Once again, it is the responsibility of each health authority to decide how it runs its appointments system. That is precisely why we embarked on the validation exercise and why we are giving the sort of advice to health authorities that we are at present.

Mr. Harvey: Does my hon. Friend agree that the 9 per cent. increase for nurses will do a great deal to improve morale in the Health Service? Does he also agree that it is highly desirable that so much of the funding for that should come not from the area health authorities but from central Government?

Mr. Robinson: I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said. It is perhaps worth recording that under the previous Labour Government the value of nurses' salaries actually fell by 21 per cent., whereas with this pay award the overall increase in nurses' pay, after allowing for inflation, is 30 per cent.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Would it not be wiser for the Government to tackle the basic problems relating to ill health in Wales—unemployment, substandard housing, inadequate nutrition and a poor environment? Surely such measures would be more beneficial than pressing our general practitioners to distribute glossy Government propaganda.

Mr. Robinson: The one thing that the hon. Gentleman absolutely hates is the truth. The truth is that we have increased total cash resources available to health authorities in Wales in the current year by 7·9 per cent. That is why revenue provision for health authorities has increased by 33 per cent. in real terms since 1979; that is why we have invested £495 million in the capital estate of the Health Service in Wales; that is why the numbers of staff are up by 13·5 per cent. since 1979; and that is why tens of thousands more patients are being cared for in Wales today than was possible in 1979.

Mr. Foot: The hon. Gentleman gave the House particulars about nurses' salaries under the previous Labour Government, but will he tell us the exact dates with which he makes the comparison, because, if he makes an investigation, he will find that, unfortunately, he has been supplied with misleading figures.

Mr. Robinson: The figures given were for 1974 to 1979, and they were given in the House recently by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I should like to make a plea on behalf of my constituents and the people of mid-Wales. Will the Minister consider giving extra financial aid to the East Dyfed health authority to enable it to build the urgently needed second phase at Bronglais hospital, Aberystwyth?

Mr. Robinson: I remind the hon. Gentleman that we have given increases to the East Dyfed health authority for its current expenditure—nearly 6 per cent. this year—and for its capital programme. Indeed, at this moment, at a cost of £24 million, we are building a brand new hospital in Llanelli. The local health authority has a continuing capital programme and has many developments and plans within that programme.

Leasehold Property

11. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many domestic leaseholders in Wales he expects to be affected by the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Specific statistical information in the form requested is not available. On 30 June 1986 I informed the hon. Gentleman that legislation would be introduced

"which would extend to all domestic leaseholders a right to challenge the coverage and premiums for the insurance of their properties proposed by owners of freeholds." — [*Official Report*, 30 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 684.]

On Second Reading of the Bill I informed the House that Government amendments would be tabled to meet that commitment. I am pleased to inform the House that that has been done and that I expect to move them in Standing Committee tomorrow.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister acknowledge that on 30 June he implied a lot more when he answered questions in the House? Will he confirm that the legislation as it now exists with the amendments that he is now proposing will neither extend to leaseholders the right to choose their own insurance company nor give them the right to purchase their freeholds at a precise and predetermined level? Those are the things that the Minister promised the House. How can he justify that betrayal of his own constituents, many of whom are faced with the predations of companies such as Castle Beg and Banana Bliss, and of the promises that he gave in this Chamber?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman obviously has not read *Hansard*, and I would have had a lot more sympathy with him had he attended the Second Reading debate in question. I have already quoted what I said on 30 June, and I shall do so again. I said:

"which would extend to all domestic leaseholders a right to challenge the coverage and premiums for the insurance of their properties proposed by owners of freeholds". — [*Official Report*, 30 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 684.]

That is precisely what the clauses that have been tabled do. The amendments that we have tabled give leaseholders three important new rights—the right to know specific details about the insurance of their homes, the right to challenge the terms of such insurance, and the right to ask the court to vary leases that contain defective provisions in relation to insurance.

The hon. Gentleman's other point was not part of the assurances that I gave the House on 30 June.

Mr. Roy Hughes: The Minister still misses the point. Labour Members support the legislation as far as it goes, but we also support my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) in his understanding that this legislation would extend to all domestic leaseholders. If the Minister cannot now fulfil the promise that he made, he should not have made it in the first place.

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said. It does extend to all domestic leaseholders. The matters that are now being raised are really ones for the Committee stage of the Bill. That Committee stage is being dealt with in a bipartisan manner and the discussion is constructive on both sides. I find it strange that the kind of rancour that is now coming from the Opposition Benches is in no way manifesting itself in the work of the Committee.

Schools (Ministerial Visits)

12. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales to how many *(a)* state schools and *(b)* private schools he has paid official visits this year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I have visited four local education authority maintained schools and one Roman Catholic voluntary aided school so far this year. I have not visited any independent schools.

Mr. Jones: Is it not the case that if the money spent by Welsh Office Ministers on sponsoring pupils in private schools was spent on the state sector it would mean at least £5 per child in secondary education? Is it not also true that, according to the latest polls, parents believe that, under this Government, standards have fallen largely because the state sector is still underfunded, even in an election year? Her Majesty's Inspectorate points to an alarming situation where parent-teacher associations are now bailing out our schools throughout the length and breadth of Wales. Is it not a fact that since 1979 Welsh Office Ministers from public schools have neglected our state schools and favoured their own?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman's first point is quite wrong. I have already told him in the House that, even if we were not to spend on the assisted places scheme, it would add only 30p to the £1,400 spent per child in the maintained sector. The amount spent is only 0·126 per cent. of total spending on the maintained sector. As for falling standards, I deny that absolutely. We have taken steps to improve education in Wales, and will continue to do so. As for spending, the hon. Gentleman must know that, while spending has remained roughly constant, pupil numbers are now 14·5 per cent. down on what they were in 1977-78, whereas the number of teachers has declined by only 7 per cent. We are spending more per pupil than was spent under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that if we are to find more resources for state schools in the Principality the most effective way is to remove surplus places at a faster rate? I instance the example of Clwyd, where at present 22,300 surplus places in the primary and secondary sectors are costing £3·5 million a year just to keep empty. Why do Labour Members not get off their backsides and support the Government in trying to reach their target of removing two fifths of those surplus places so that we can spend the money on where it is most needed—in the hard-pressed urban primary and secondary schools?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) could begin by supporting his education spokesman, the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), who is encouraging teachers not to take industrial action. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside should give his hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North his support. However, with regard to surplus places, my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) is absolutely right. There are about 150,000 surplus places in Wales and I know of some schools—in Clwyd, for example—where there are more surplus places than pupils at individual schools. I am also glad to say that a number of local education authorities are at various stages in the consideration of plans for rationalising school provision, particularly in the face of the declining secondary pupil numbers.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: On his school visits, has the Minister visited any of the smaller comprehensive schools in western and mid-Wales to see the problems that they face in trying to provide for a broad-based bilingual curriculum with very scare resources?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman put his finger on the matter when he described the schools as "smaller comprehensive schools". Obviously, the smaller the school, the more difficult it is to provide a broad-based curriculum, particularly at secondary level. That is why so many local education authorities are considering sixth-form and tertiary colleges and other such reorgansiations.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

13. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the adequacy of resources for the general certificate of secondary education examinations.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have had representations from about 35 individuals and organisations.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Are not the resources available for the examination, whose introduction was very warmly supported by the main teachers' unions, perfectly adequate provided that the teachers' unions, which have now received a very large pay award, are prepared to show the very minimum of co-operation to make the new scheme work, rather than seeking to wreck the whole education system in pursuit of wage claims?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The teachers' unions were foremost in calling for a single examination at 16. Massive preparations followed the decision taken by the Government in 1984. Alas, the training that we provided was disrupted and boycotted during the industrial action last year. I note that the NAS/UWT is still highly critical of the GCSE, for which it called. Additional resources have been made available. Current education spending has been increased by 11 per cent. for Wales this year under the rate support grant settlement. We have given special assistance over three years of £2·4 million, and of £1 million additionally for INSET training over a period of two years. I am glad to say that local education authorities in Wales have increased their capitation allowances to provide additional funds for the GCSE.

Mr. Barry Jones: For the examination to go well the teachers' morale must be restored, because the Government have destroyed that morale. Is it not the case that the Government have destroyed the teachers' free negotiating machinery? Has not the Secretary of State for Education and Science chosen to take greater powers over teachers than any Minister in peacetime, with the Secretary of State for Wales embarrassingly on his coat-tails?

Mr. Roberts: Is it not the fact that the Government had to take that action and Parliament had to pass the relevant Act because of the inability of the unions to come to an agreement? With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point about destroying morale, I am sure that many workers in the country would like to have a 16·4 per cent. increase imposed upon them, over 18 months.

Water Rates

15. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the level of water rates in the Welsh water authority area.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend has received eight written representations about the level of water charges in the Welsh water authority area.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that an increase in water rates that is double the rate of inflation is unacceptable to Welsh water ratepayers, and will he tell the House why Mr. Bernard Doyle, the chief executive of the Welsh water authority, resigned? Do the Government intend to go ahead with the privatisation of the water industry in Wales?

Mr. Robinson: I am satisfied that the increase in charges was the minimum necessary to meet higher costs due to inflation and to enable the board to continue to invest in improving the quality of services, such as water supply and sewerage, and to improve the environment, including coastal waters. The increase for the Welsh water authority is within the band of increases for all water authorities in England and Wales.

The hon. Gentleman's point about the chief executive of the Welsh water authority is not a matter for me, but I understand that he resigned because of a dispute about his contract and that it has nothing to do with other matters.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Labour Statistics

22. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many persons are employed by the Duchy in the north-west region.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): Nineteen, Sir.

Mr. Silvester: Is my right hon. Friend also pleased that there has been a continuous fall in unemployment in the north-west during the past eight months in respect of both male and female unemployment, and that the percentage of unemployment is low compared with the previous period?

Mr. Tebbit: Indeed, and that contrasts starkly with the predictions made not that long ago by Labour party spokesmen to the effect that unemployment would rise inexorably and would exceed 5 million by the time of the next general election. As usual, another of their alarm scares and smears has been shown to be as untrue as they always have been.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding the welcome increase in employment prospects for people in the north-west, does the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster accept that there is a major problem of unemployment in the region and that only when the Government recognise the need to put money into construction projects, such as the creation of improved housing and the building of something like the Mersey barrage, will many of the unemployed in that important sector find work?

Mr. Tebbit: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the major problem of unemployment that still exists

in the region, but it would be foolish to return to the policies that brought about that structural imbalance in the region—high public spending, state intervention and things of that sort. Of course there is a need for infrastructure spending, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will shortly have something to say on our roads programme. Of course it has been right to help Liverpool by giving it the amount of urban aid grant that we have. Of course it is right to improve the water supply in the north-west. But in the long term the salvation of the north-west will be the private sector of enterprise creating firms which produce goods that people wish to buy.

Ministerial Meetings

24. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many official meetings he has had in the last month.

Mr. Tebbit: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: But what—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think we have yet had that answer.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) was not here to ask his Question No. 19; he must be out somewhere. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question — this is one fewer than the previous answer—is 18.

Mr. Winnick: What amount of time can the right hon. Gentleman devote to meetings when he seems to be so busy intimidating and bullying the broadcasting authorities? Is it not true that a recent independent report that examined the BBC coverage of the American raids on Libya shows that there was no justification for the criticism levelled by the right hon. Gentleman? Is it too much to expect him to apologise?

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman seems to be complaining that my productivity, like the productivity of most people in industry, is expanding greatly and that I work too hard. I have to tell him that I shall continue to behave in that way. As for his complaints about the BBC, my independent report on the BBC's coverage of the Libyan incident came to a very different conclusion. That conclusion was accepted by most independent observers. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to ask me about the fact that the BBC recently confessed that it was entirely wrong to omit from one of its news broadcasts an item of news favourable to the Government. The director general was kind enough to say that he was wrong. I accept that he was wrong and I hope that the BBC will improve its journalistic standards.

Sir Alex Fletcher: May I ask my right hon. Friend how many meetings he has had in the last month with the chairman of the party and whether agreement has been reached between both offices about the advice that should be given to the Prime Minister about the date of the next election?

Mr. Tebbit: The two of us have had a number of meetings, but fortunately I do not have to answer at the Dispatch Box for the advice that the chairman of the party will give to the Prime Minister. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is very well content that the Prime Minister will make her own decision in her own time. I know that right hon. and hon. Members opposite are eager to have a general election—*[Interruption.]*—although I suspect not quite as eager as some others.

Telephone Charges

25. **Mr. Willie. W. Hamilton** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total expenditure on telephone calls by his office for the last financial year.

Mr. Tebbit: I regret that it is not possible to arrive at a figure disaggregated from the bill for the Cabinet Office as a whole.

Mr. Hamilton: Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether he telephoned any of the British Telecom shareholders instead of sending them letters that invaded their privacy for the sake of party political propaganda? I have had letters from my new constituency in Devon, from professional people, objecting very much to this unsolicited mail. Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether there was any public expense involved in that, or was he behaving purely as a party-political hack?

Mr. Tebbit: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has had complaints from professional people and, that being so, they are professional complainers. As Members of Parliament we have all known those in our time. Of course, facilities for the Government that are provided by the taxpayer are not used by the party. The two things are kept entirely and completely separate. The hon. Gentleman asked about invading privacy. There are many complaints about direct mail. For example, my friend the chairman of the National Union was a little disturbed the other day when he received a begging letter from Mr. John Pardoe asking for funds on behalf of the alliance.

Mr. Watts: In his capacity as a telephone user, has my right hon. Friend noted a substantial improvement in the performance of British Telecom since privatisation? Does he expect similar improvements in the performance of the electricity industry after it has been privatised?

Mr. Tebbit: A few years ago there were great queues to obtain telephones, but telephones are now freely and readily available and the service is very good. On the generality of the case, very few companies that have been privatised have not improved their performance. Perhaps the most marked improvement of all is in the National Freight Corporation, which was sold to its employees. I trust that the Opposition are not threatening to re-nationalise that, for a start.

26. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much his office spent on telephone calls in the last financial year.

Mr. Tebbit: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wigley: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on getting his lines right this time. Is he aware that there is considerable misgiving about the way in which he has used his dual offices—one party political and the other in government — to browbeat and bully people into being afraid of what an alternative Government would do to Telecom shares and at the same time asking for finance for his party? Is that not something that his Government and people in his job should avoid doing in future?

Mr. Tebbit: Come, come I think, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman is being a little silly about these things. All that I have done in any of the many offices that I hold is to make sure that the public are well aware of Opposition policies. Provided we stand on our record as a Government and set out the Opposition's policies as against ours, we shall have no problems whatever about walking the next general election, whenever it comes.

Mr. Holt: Would my right hon. Friend care to say whether any of the telephone conversations that he has had were with Langbaurgh town hall, where the police have been called in to investigate the activities of the Labour-controlled housing department? They were called in by the Labour leader of the council, who is one of seven deselected Labour councillors who will fight as individual Labour against official Labour in the local elections in just over a week's time.

Mr. Tebbit: Fortunately, I am not responsible for the Labour party's internal affairs. If I were, I should have to agree with the hon. Member, not for South Hams, but for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), who, in the *Daily Telegraph* not so long ago criticised the intolerant and bigoted attitude of the Labour party, but that was when he was writing articles about why the Labour party must change, with the hon. Members for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) — somewhat peculiar company for the hon. Gentleman to keep.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Scottish Business

28. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Lord Privy Seal what consideration he has given to changes in the procedures and facilities of the House designed to improve the handling of Scottish business.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have no such proposals for change in mind at present.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman improve on the position whereby a letter to me as a Scottish Member of Parliament from the Secretary of State for Scotland was highlighted at 11 am on Thursday 23 April by the Prime Minister's press secretary at a meeting with the Lobby press? Does that not prove yet again that in the matter of the raid on the BBC in Glasgow in relation to the Zircon affair Mr. Bernard Ingham was the organ grinder and the Secretary of State one of the monkeys?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to relate this to the handling of Scottish business.

Mr. Dalyell: It is entirely a matter of the procedures of the Scottish Office. It is a unique procedure in the history of the Scottish Office that a letter to a Scottish Member of Parliament should be highlighted——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked his question. I just find it difficult to understand.

Mr. Biffen: I had naturally expected the supplementary question to relate to Scottish business as such, but I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has raised a point concerning the administration of the Scottish Office and I will, of course, refer it to my right hon. Friend.

Envelopes

29. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal how many *(a)* self-seal and *(b)* non self-seal envelopes were provided for use by hon. Members and others during the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: During the period March 1986 to February 1987, 850,000 white self-seal post-paid envelopes and 2,550,000 gummed envelopes of the equivalent type were provided for the use of right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend be kind enough, in his capacity as Lord Privy Seal, to move entirely to self-seal envelopes for hon. Members, bearing in mind the obnoxious taste of gummed envelopes? Alternatively, will he arrange for a more pleasant flavour of gum for the benefit of hon. Members' secretaries?

Mr. Biffen: This is essentially a matter for the Services Committee. I am sure that my hon. Friend's comments will be noted, and I have reason to believe that his view is more widely held.

Sir Alex Fletcher: Self-sealing envelopes are a long-awaited innovation, but is my right hon. Friend aware that the quality is very poor and that they do not stick down? Will he have a word with the suppliers?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, the point has been noted. I gave a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 8 April, at column *230* of *Hansard*, explaining the remedial action being taken.

Mr. Cormack: How much do these navel-contemplating questions cost to answer? Could they not be left off the Order Paper?

Mr. Biffen: My mind boggles at assessing the cost of answering such questions or, indeed, the supplementary question that I have just been asked. I believe that my time is costed at rather less than other activities in the House, but I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Westminster Hall (Railings)

30. **Mr. Janner** asked the Lord Privy Seal what representations the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) has received on the railings in Westminster Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. and learned Member addressed a question to me on this matter on 25 June last year, and I refer him to the reply that I gave on that occasion. Neither I nor the Services Committee have received any other recent representations on this subject.

Mr. Janner: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the once temporary railings in Westminster Hall should not be there, that they are ugly, inexpensive and unpleasant, and that they spoil one of the most beautiful buildings in this country? Even if other people seem not to have noticed this, will the Services Committee at least consider replacing the railings with others that are more sightly?

Mr. Biffen: I could not accept any of those strictures. All these are matters of aesthetic taste, and I would back my taste against that of the hon. and learned Gentleman any day. As he asked that the matter be referred to the

Services Committee, I shall do so and point out that he is unique in making his complaint, and that money spent on this is money that cannot readily be spent elsewhere.

Parliamentary Questions

The following Question stood upon the Order Paper:

32. **Mr. Dickens** to ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will give his latest estimate of the cost of *(a)* answering an oral question, *(b)* answering a written question, *(c)* printing all questions on the Order Paper and Notice Paper in the 1985-86 Session and *(d)* printing all answers in the *Official Report* in the 1985-86 Session.

Mr. Biffen: The cost in officials' time of replying to questions vary considerably, but the current average cost is estimated at £75 for——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not see the hon. Gentleman rise, so we must go back to questions to the Secretary of State for Wales.

WALES

16. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of citizens of the Principality needing cardiac surgery are able to have their operation within Wales; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): Comprehensive information on numbers of patients receiving cardiac surgery outside Wales is not readily available. However, during 1985, the most recent period for which information is held centrally, of 798 patients from Wales reported as having been treated in hospitals in England and Wales and whose specialty on discharge was recorded as cardiac surgery, 704, or 88 per cent., were treated at hospitals in Wales.

Dr. Thomas: Does the Minister recall, in 1982, a report on the needs of cardiac surgery in Wales from Professor Williams? Does he not realise that the shortfall in cardiac surgery in Wales is such that we need two centres for south Wales, one serving the south-west and the other Cardiff?

Mr. Robinson: It is because of that shortfall that the Government have increased the number of open heart operations being carried out in the Principality. At the moment we have a target of about 600 a year, but we intend to increase that number to about 1,100. As a result, a paediatric cardiac unit is to be built at the University hospital of Wales, in Cardiff, as the first phase of a substantial development of the regional cardiac service.

Dairy Industry

19. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the present state of the dairy industry in Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): The December agreement by the Council of Agriculture Ministers produced a further package of measures designed to curb the problem of over-supply in milk. While individual dairy farms continue to face financial difficulty as a result of the imposition of quotas, the dairy sector as a whole in Wales showed a marked improvement in incomes during 1985-86.

Mr. Howells: I am sure that the Minister would be the first to admit that many dairy farmers in west Wales face financial problems, which many will find it difficult to overcome. To whom does the Secretary of State attribute blame? Is it the Government of the day, the EEC, his colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, or himself?

Mr. Edwards: It is a pleasure to see the hon. Member in his place asking his question, unlike the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), who publicised his question in the newspapers but did not come to the House to ask it. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that, with substantial surpluses being produced in this country and outside, an adjustment of the milk sector is inevitable. I hope that he will not pretend to his electors that such an adjustment can take place without any pain and discomfort.

Labour Statistics

20. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the number of notified vacancies for jobs in Wales and in the Vale of Glamorgan, respectively, at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres and career offices in Wales on 6 March 1987 were 12,100 and 300 respectively. This information is not available on a constituency basis, but the corresponding figures for South Glamorgan are 1,580 and 83.

Sir Raymond Gower: Do these figures show an increase over the past 12 months?

Mr. Edwards: There has been a satisfactory level of unfilled vacancies, showing the number of jobs that are available. My hon. Friend should understand that only a proportion of job vacancies are notified to jobcentres and career offices, and there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of newspaper advertising for jobs, particularly in Cardiff and the surrounding areas. I am sure that he will have seen with pleasure the recent survey by the Cardiff chamber of commerce and industry, which says that south Wales is heading for an economic boom.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that, in Clwyd, British Aerospace is going great guns? Will he take this opportunity to demonstrate his full support for the £750 million launch-aid for the Airbus A330, A340, and will he say whether the Government will make a statement? Does he know that many Welsh jobs hang on that decision?

Mr. Edwards: I am glad to agree with the hon. Gentleman that that company, like so many others in Wales, is going great guns. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the question whether a statement is made from the Dispatch Box is not my responsibility.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I support the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) in emphasising the enormous importance of that project, not only to north Wales, but to the aviation industry generally. I hope that my right hon. Friend will exercise what influence he can to ensure that the necessary launch-aid is forthcoming.

Mr. Edwards: I agree with my hon. Friend that this is an extremely important project, and that it is a company

whose future is of the greatest significance to his constituents and many others. He would not expect me to make a statement on the subject this afternoon because, as he knows, I am not the Minister who is primarily responsible.

Northern Ireland

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

The House will be aware of the recent serious increase in the number of casualties which have been caused by terrorist actions. In the last week in particular, two members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, one Ulster Defence Regiment soldier and three civilians have been murdered. The civilian deaths were of the foreman of a building company, and most recently the murder of Lord Justice Gibson and Lady Gibson.

As to the details of this latest outrage, while I have not yet received the full report on it, I have had an initial discussion with the Deputy Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding, and I shall be meeting the Chief Constable and the GOC again later today. However, I can give the House some further information.

The explosives were in a blue Cortina car, which had been reported stolen a month ago in South Armagh. At the time of its theft, the car had GB number plates. It is believed to have been left only a few minutes earlier at the side of the road between the border crossing point and the security force check point. The method of detonation appears to have been by radio signal. In addition to the two fatalities, nine other people were injured.

The question has rightly been raised as to how there could have been any outside knowledge of Sir Maurice and Lady Gibson's movements. The RUC advised me of evidence that bookings were made in their own names through a travel agency in Belfast on 29 December, and that on 12 February a change was made to the date of their return. The booking form included the description and registration number of the car. Further detailed investigations are continuing and I will inform the House as appropriate of any further information.

I know that the whole House will share with me the feelings of horror at this outrage, at the loss of a distinguished and brave member of the Northern Ireland judiciary and of his wife, and to express our deepest sympathy to their families.

But while public attention has been focused on this particular outrage, it would be quite wrong not to express our deep concern equally about the other tragic victims of this most recent and savage burst of terrorist violence. The recent and cowardly attacks on off-duty members of the security forces, coupled with murders of ploicemen in Newcastle and Portrush, the murder of a civilian prison instructor at Magee college, and the use of his body to lure two further members of the RUC to their deaths are indicative of a renewed desperation and viciousness in the IRA campaign. The security forces will meet the challenge of these new tactics by the IRA with the resolution and courage that have served them so well in the past, and the Government will give them all possible support in their vital task.

But while the role of the RUC and the armed forces is crucial in the front line against terrorism, they also need the unqualified support of the whole community in their task.

The clear purpose of the IRA at this time is to undermine the morale of the security forces, to increase tension and hatred between the communities and thus to provoke over-reaction from some Unionists and to create distrust and ill will between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. That is their purpose, but they will not succeed.

The security forces have given abundant proof of their courage and determination to stand against terrorism. They now look to the whole community to show the same steadfastness in the face of the current campaign and for everybody to show particulatr vigilance over theit personal security. Above all, it is the time when the whole community must give its unqualified support for the RUC and the armed forces, and give the fullest co-operation in this vital fight to defeat the terrorists.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On behalf of the Opposition, may I add our outright condemnation to that of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following the series of tragedies that have overtaken our fellow citizens in that part of the United Kingdom? May I also extend our condolences and deep regret to the son and daughter of Sir Maurice and Lady Gibson who, like so many others in Northern Ireland, have had their parents tragically taken from them?

The Secretary of State referred to others who had lost their lives in Northern Ireland, including two members of the RUC, one UDR soldier and three civilians over the past week. About 29 people have lost thier lives since the beginning of the year. We share with the Secretary of State the deep sense of loss and tragedy and extend to families who have lost their loved ones our deep compassion and condolences. Not for the first time, the point has to be made that the bombs and bullets of the IRA create widows and orphans, but add nothing significant to the political debate.

Sir Maurice Gibson, as Lord Justice of Appeal at the Supreme Court of Judicature in Northern Ireland, was an Irishman through and through. He dedicated his life to the community in which he was born, in which he lived and in which he has now died. His wife, Lady Gibson, was innocent of any involvement except the involvement of marriage and devotion to her husband, for which she has paid a grievous price. It should be remembered that, when Lord Louis Mountbatten died in similar circumstances, a young Irish boy aged eight or nine died at the same time. The lesson for the whole island of Ireland is that the IRA kills Irish men and Irish women, seeks to be its own judge, jury and executioner and seeks by violence what it cannot achieve by election.

The House has often been described as the mother of democracies. How long, therefore, will it take for those who perpetrate violence to understand that the House and this country will never bend the knee to terrorists and never accept submission to the bullet and that our people are as hardy now in their resistance to violence as they were during the last war? To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill, what kind of people does the IRA think we are?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that half a tonne of explosives was found in County Cavan in the Republic of Ireland on 22 April and that on 23 April a further large haul of explosives was found in Donegal near Bunbeg? We accept that there has been enhanced cross-border co-operation between the Governments of the Republic and the United Kingdom since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but will the Secretary of State agree that a greater public perception of that increased co-operation is

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

required? Will he see how the public may be made aware, without our giving away secrets to the IRA, of what is being done in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland? If the Anglo-Irish Agreement is perceived in private among civil servants and politicians to be a success, equally it must be perceived to be a success by the public. Otherwise, the IRA will indeed undermine confidence in the political process and in the agreement itself.

Will the Secretary of State review the concept of a no-man's-land between the Republic and Northern Ireland on the land border of two sovereign states and ensure that never again can cars packed with explosives be parked there to endanger the lives of those passing from the Republic to the north?

What steps are being taken to impress upon those who may be at risk in Northern Ireland that, in their daily programme of living, they should be less sanguine and less philosophical and more alert to the danger of death not only for themselves, but for their families?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, if the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, there must be vigilance for members of the security forces, vigilance for members of the RUC and the UDR and vigilance for the population?

This time of crisis must be a time of opportunity to ensure that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is strong enough to survive IRA attacks and enchance still further co-operation between the Republic and the United Kingdom in the interests of our respective democracies.

Mr. King: It is certainly true that there have been three major finds of explosives in recent days, one by the RUC and two by the Garda. As the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) sought to show, those finds put into perspective the fact that the security forces have had a number of very significant successes in frustrating other serious attacks.

I understand entirely the hon. Gentleman's point about being more forthcoming about some of the steps and arrangements that we are seeking to make in regard to cross-border security. By their nature, a number of the arrangements and the proposals that we are working on at the present time must remain not just confidential, but secret. That is one of the difficulties in getting people to understand some of the basic work that is being done in this area.

I certainly accept the hon. Gentleman's comments about no no-man's-land. There is no no-man's-land—that ground is patrolled by the Army—but it is true that the security forces vehicle checkpoint is some distance back from the border because of the problems that have been experienced. We are aware of the tragedy of 1985 and the reason why the location of that checkpoint is a little back from the border.

With regard to personal security, the RUC seeks to give the clearest possible advice to everybody who is under any threat within Northern Ireland. Its advice is well known, as is its readiness always to seek to help with measures to assist. Obviously there is a clear responsibility on individuals to pay the closest possible attention to sensible measures of security for their own persons.

Lastly, I very much appreciate the forthright way in which the hon. Gentleman spoke about the unwillingness of this House to give any quarter whatever to the terrorist threat. I talked about the need for everybody to show steadfastness in the face of that terrorist threat. Above all, it is from this House of Commons, these Houses of Parliament that that lead should come. The people of Northern Ireland should know that they have our total support in the fight against terrorism and that, regardless of party, regardless of controversy of other kinds, we are united in that matter.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Might I explain that my colleagues and I who represent Northern Ireland feel that, in view of the gravity of the issues, it would be utterly futile to deal with those grave matters by means of superficial exchanges across the Floor of the House?

Mr. King: I obviously appreciate, and certainly do not dissent from, the right hon. Gentleman's expression of concern about the gravity of the position. I obviously share that concern. However, I believe that it must be a matter for regret if it is not in this House of Commons, in this House of the Parliament of the Union that we stand together, that we discuss these issues and that we act in concert to try to bring to book the real enemy that we face. This is not a matter of political division; it is the evil of terrorism against which we should act in concert.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us who have opposed and do oppose the Anglo-Irish Agreement wish fully to support his appeal for everyone in Northern Ireland to support the security forces in these grave times?

Does my right hon. Friend accept that, instead of recriminating over transgressions of the border by the security forces of the Republic and the United Kingdom, the two sovereign Governments should now agree to free movement across the border by those forces in pursuit of terrorism? After so many years, is it not time that the British armed forces started talking and working directly with the Irish Army and air corps.

Mr. King: My hon. Friend knows as well as anybody in the House the sensitivities surrounding the matter. It is very much my hope that we can, working with the Irish Government—I much appreciate the totally unqualified support that we received from the new Taoiseach, Mr. Haughey in his statement and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Lenihan, who have promised every available support—bring to justice the perpetrators of this crime and others. To those who believe that there is no possibility of co-operation and hope, I must say that that seems to me to be a policy of despair. I believe that there is recognition throughout the island of Ireland of the damage that terrorism is doing, in terms of physical outrage in the north and without doubt in terms of economic damage and suffering in the south. I believe that there is a determination to rid the island once and for all of the scourge of terrorism. I say to my hon. Friend, without going into detail, that I take very seriously the points that he makes. I hope that we can make some progress around the issues that he mentioned.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Hon. Members in all parts of the House will want to be associated with the strongest possible condemnation of the hateful and cowardly outrage which took place this weekend. I associate my right hon. and hon. Friends with what has been said.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the continued violence demonstrates the fear among extreme elements

about the agreement, which represents a way in which majority and minority traditions may gradually fulfil their aspirations and obtain justice? Is it not therefore vital for the whole House unequivocally to reiterate its determination to maintain the agreement? Will the Secretary of State consider building on the agreement by establishing a joint security commission? Does he agree that it would be very helpful if Cardinal O'Fiaich and politicians from the nationalist tradition offered unambiguous support for the RUC and encouraged Catholics to support and join the force?

Mr. King: I appreciate very much the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Whatever view others may hold about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, from a political point of view there is absolutely no question but that the IRA fears it very much indeed because it sees that the resource of the border—the very length of it and the existence of the two jurisdictions—itself provides that advantage which the terrorists can exploit in both directions. Both Governments are well aware of that. Against that background, the IRA feels that we might succeed effectively in denying them that resource. Of course it is not something that can be achieved overnight. Those who suggest that grossly underestimate the skill and cunning of some of the terrorist organisations, and to do that would be a grave mistake.

It certainly would be very helpful in this fight if the security forces were to feel that they had the unqualified support of all the people in Northern Ireland. I look to all, particularly those in the Nationalist community, to give unqualified support to those men in the security forces who stand out day and night, often to protect their own members, against violence and intimidation. In their current challenge, it is in the interests of the majority and minority communities alike to stand together beside the forces of law and order.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Is it not immensely depressing to hear the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) say that he wishes to stand aside from these terrible events in his own Province? [HON. MEMBERS: "He did not say that."] Is that not an abdication of responsibility which is wholly to be condemned? Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a feeling in this country that the co-operation between the RUC and other forces — the Garda and military forces in southern Ireland—is not as good as it should be and not as good as was promised, and that it could have prevented the tragedy?

Mr. King: I am not sure that I would go so far as to endorse my hon. Friend's latter point, but we certainly see the potential for developing further the co-operation between the RUC and the Garda. Some people talk as if it were just a matter of signing some document, and one would get instant improvement in co-operation. It has to be built upon. I draw on the professional advice of the Chief Constable of the RUC, who goes no further than to say that, in his judgment, it provides the best opportunity for the development of closer co-operation, and the best opportunity for dealing with terrorism more effectively. That is the honest and truthful appraisal of the situation. There is nothing on a plate, but that opportunity is provided. Anybody who really believes that we shall make a more effective response against the terrorists by not working in close co-operation and harmony with the Irish Government misunderstands the reality of the situation.

I should like to add this to my hon. Friend. There may have been a misunderstanding. I hope that I misunderstood slightly what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) meant. I think that he was implying—some of my right hon. and hon. Friends may not have understood this — that it was not that he declined to use the Chamber to discuss the matter, but that this question exchange was not the occasion that he would choose.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): As the Member in whose constituency that terrible deed took place, on behalf of my party I should like to add our condolences to the family of Lord Justice and Lady Gibson, and, indeed, to the families of all the people in the north of Ireland who have suffered in the recent past.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that there are two things that the Provisional IRA fear most? The first is the close co-operation between the British Government and the Irish Government in the search to bring about peace and stability in Northern Ireland. The second is that the Nationalist community, the Catholic community in the north of Ireland, will be weaned away from support for the Provisional IRA and leave it isolated.

Will the right hon. Gentleman further confirm that one of the aims of the Provisional IRA at present is to provoke the type of punitive reaction that would prevent that from happening? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that his Government, through himself, will be careful not to play into the Provisional IRA's hands by doing that?

Mr. King: We are anxious to build the support of the minority community in Northern Ireland and closer identification with administration and security efforts in the Province. That is very important. After the recent tragedy, I am sure that many in the Nationalist community will have learnt yet further what a totally unacceptable nature and viciousness the terrorists have. It is worth remarking that whoever detonated that bomb had no scruples about the other accidents that they might have caused at that time, no matter how horrific the death of Lord Justice Gibson. Not only were there the rugby players who were travelling south and the girls who appeared on television, but there was a bus with 50 schoolchildren taking part in a sports exchange, which was travelling north. These people have no compunction or scruples whatsoever, no matter how much suffering they may cause. These people hold out no promise whatsoever for the future of people anywhere in the island of Ireland and deserve the total condemnation of us all.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I am sure that we are all depressed by the latest wave of killings, but as it is widely recognised that the RUC is better trained and better equipped than the police force in the Republic, can my right hon. Friend say what offers of training or equipment have been made to the police in the Republic since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and how many of those offers have been accepted?

Mr. King: A number of suggestions have been made and offers of help given. Some have been accepted. Further training is being undertaken in different ways.

[Mr. King]

However, the point behind my hon. Friend's question is correct. I assure him that we are anxious to assist in any possible way.

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): There is no doubt that the political wing of the Provisional IRA has had to give way to a more militant campaign since it was shunned in the elections in the Irish Republic. Therefore, its increased kill and bomb campaign is intended to terrorise the whole Province and, coincidentally, to try to smash the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Is the Secretary of State aware that that will now necessitate a higher security profile in many previously quiet areas? Will he confirm that, if need be, more British troops will be drafted into the Province? I hope that he will consider parallel patrols by the Army and RUC and that, for a time, they will increase their presence on the streets. I hope that he will also consider increasing the facilities of the British Army and of the special forces in the Province so that they can retaliate and capture more easily than hitherto. The Secretary of State must now turn the tide and retaliate more effectively against the terrorists. If he adopts some, if not all, of those measures, I am sure that he will receive the support of most hon. Members in this House.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. As he was a predecessor in my office, I listened with particular respect to his points. I accept his analysis of the split in Sinn Fein following the last Ard Fheis, its decision to stand and to take seats in the Dail, with the consequent humiliation at the polls and the advent of a new Government in the Irish Republic. I am sure that some of those factors, and their consequences, are the explanation behind the recent burst of violence. Although any death is one too many, it is fair to say that the violence of the past few weeks has followed a period when, otherwise, casualties were significantly lower than in the corresponding period last year.

The right hon. Gentleman will understand if I do not go further, but I take careful note of all the points that he has made. A number of those options must be considered and some will undoubtedly be discussed later today when I meet the leaders of the security forces.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is it not a fact that, throughout the United Kingdom — in England, Scotland and Wales—many people have laid down their lives in defence of the Union and, in so doing, have supported the policies that have been endorsed by the overwhelming majority of hon. Members? In those circumstances, is it not a tragedy that, for the most part those who represent Northern Ireland constituencies remain silent in this House?

Mr. King: Obviously, I do regret that fact. I hope that it will be recognised that this is the Parliament of the Union where such debate and discussion should take place, through official and other channels. I endorse the point made by my hon. Friend about the commitment in the whole of the United Kingdom for the rights of people in Northern Ireland to live in freedom from fear. That commitment is absolute and has been endorsed by successive Governments. I say that when my own regiment is serving in Northern Ireland—and doing so gladly—and when some of my consitituents, many other hon. Members' constitituents, and the sons of our constituents, from all parts of the United Kingdom, are serving in Northern Ireland. Obviously, people in the Province are in the front line, and the courage of the RUC and the UDR is outstanding, but the effort that is made by the whole of the United Kingdom should be recognised.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Without wishing to appear to be making unhelpful premature judgments, as some Unionist Members were quick to do over the weekend, does the Secretary of State not think that there were at least two surprising and basic deficiencies in the security arrangements? First, will he inform the House why an empty car was allowed to remain by the roadside in such a sensitive area? Secondly, why were Lord Justice Gibson and his wife allowed to publicise their travel arrangements so long in advance—I repeat the word "publicise"?

Mr. King: I would rather not comment on the hon. Gentleman's latter point. People must take responsibility for their affairs and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the clearest guidance is given. All hon. Members, particularly those representing the Province, know of the guidance from the RUC and of the sensible, intelligent precautions to take. I would rather not comment further on that.

The hon. Gentleman will know that the road on which the car was parked carries a tremendous volume of cross-border traffic and that there is a considerable amount of parking on parts of it. Unfortunately, this vehicle was not observed in sufficent time. This has not yet been corroborated, but I understand that the presence of the vehicle had just been reported to the RUC at the time of the incident.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Is it not deplorable that some Opposition Members seized this incident to accuse the security forces in the South of leaking information to the IRA? Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on that and to confirm that the forces in the South have been increasing the sums spent on border operations? Will he further confirm that the time has come for joint patrols between the two armies, bearing in mind that both sovereign states are dedicated to the eradication of this particularly beastly form of international terrorism?

Mr. King: In tragic incidents of this type, the first stories that appear are often confused and it is unfortunate if any allegations are made before there is proper evidence. The evidence that has since appeared shows that there were several ways in which the matter could have become more public knowledge. Other aspects have not yet been corroborated, so I shall not disclose them to the House, but they might have tended practically to "publicise", to use the word of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), the journey even more.

We are certainly looking for the fullest co-operation with the Government of the Republic. My hon. Friend rightly asked about resources, and the present conditions and difficult problems of the Irish economy are no secret to the House. Obviously, bearing in mind those difficulties, we shall hope for a maximum contribution from the Republic, and we appreciate the approach that the new Government are taking on this matter.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): In welcoming the modest, lucid statement of the hon. Member for

Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to condemn those who continue to invite Sinn Fein spokesmen to public meetings in this part of the country. including that which took place in Bristol and was chaired by Councillor Ron Thomas? At that meeting the leader of the Labour group, Councillor Roger Berry, sat uncritically while the Sinn Fein spokesman expressed support for the IRA's right to "fight for freedom".

Mr. King: I join my hon. Friend in condemning such action without qualification. The apologists for the IRA pretend that there is political justification for its acts, but the whole world knows from following the election in the Republic how minuscule its support is even in the Republic of Ireland. It is now clear from recent events that its only remaining argument is terror. That is why the IRA will be defeated.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Is not a reason why the IRA is committing such atrocities that it has seen its electoral support through Sinn Fein continue to plummet as a result of the success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Should we not continue to build on that success and to improve security to ensure there is no hiding place for any terrorist, either north or south of the border?

Mr. King: I believe that the IRA can see, not only in the continuing co-operation between the British and Irish Governments—continuing, moreover, during the period of a change of Government in the Republic—but in the growing international co-operation against terrorism, that they can find no support whatever from any decent or respectable corner of the civilised world. I believe profoundly that the IRA will be frustrated in its attempts to procure arms and to win support and that we shall see the net closing gradually. That is what the IRA can also see,

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must protect the subsequent business of the House and bear in mind the fact that we have a further statement. I shall call one further question. Mr. Marlow. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sure that the whole House has the feeling that, if this level of violence were to take place in England, there would be a public outcry demanding much stronger measures than we have at the moment. Can I follow the point made by the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) that perhaps my right hon. Friend could give more scope to the security forces to put, let us say, the wind up the terrorists —many, if not most, of whom are known? It would seem that the risks to terrorists of terrorist action are currently insufficient.

Mr. King: My hon. Friend will have heard my answer to the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason). It would be wrong not to recognise the facts of the position, which are that earlier this year there was some reduction in casualties, but certainly now there is a serious increase; overall, the levels of violence and suffering are unacceptable. I am seriously considering any proposals from the security forces about the ways in which their efforts, which we back wholeheartedly, can be even more effective.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I will take points of order after the application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Porter: My point of order arises directly from the last questions.

Mr. Speaker: That may be, but I shall still take it at the end.

Inner Cities

4.6 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the inner cities initiative and the city action teams.

In February last year I announced the setting up of the new inner cities initiative in England. Its aim was to improve the targeting, and increase the benefit to local people, of the money channelled through existing central Government programmes in eight small inner city areas. We give it a modest top-up budget to test out new approaches to local problems, in particular those designed to improve training and increase the opportunities for employment and self-employment for local people. Task forces were set up in shop-front offices in each of the eight areas to co-ordinate Government action and to make better use of the large amounts of public money already being spent there. They were also given the job of working with the private sector, local authorities, voluntary groups and the residents themselves in developing local solutions to local problems.

The inner cities initiative was set up as an experimental programme. In a short time it has already shown what can be achieved by a common partnership of effort between the public and private sector with the active involvement of local people. Five different Government Departments have been involved in this work and I am also grateful for the way in which the Manpower Services Commission has supported the initiative by giving the inner cities high priority in targeting its programmes. The initiative has demonstrated how the Government, by operating at a local level, can give a lead by pulling together the efforts of all those who are involved in our inner cities.

The initiative has now been running for over a year. There have been significant and positive results. Our eight task forces have put themselves firmly on the local map. The task force have shown that new ideas and a fresh approach are just as important as money in releasing the enormous fund of energy and ideas that local people have available to tackle their problems. We said from the outset that any lessons learned from our eight small areas would be applied more widely to other inner city districts.

The results so far are so encouraging that I have now decided to expand the coverage of the initiative to other towns and cities, while retaining its experimental and informal nature. Therefore, I have decided to set up a further eight task forces on the same basis as the original eight. They will be located in parts of Coventry, Doncaster, Hartlepool, Nottingham, Rochdale, Preston, Wolverhampton and the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

The extra funds available to all the task forces to top up other programmes and to support new ideas will be increased to £14 million for 1987-88. Experience shows that the availability of this top-up money will enable all the task forces to develop programmes of action to help achieve the goals of the initiative, particularly in employment and enterprise. The approach works best where there is a genuine partnership of effort. We shall be looking to work with local people, local authorities and local industry and commerce to achieve that partnership.

I also propose to carry forward the work of the five city action teams, which we set up two years ago. Those teams consist of the regional directors of the Department of the Environment, Department of Trade and Industry and the MSC in each of the cities. They dispose of large budgets, which they seek to co-ordinate more closely, and we did not originally expect them to need separate CAT budgets as a team. However, last May we gave £1 million to the Newcastle-Gateshead team as part of a package of measures to relieve the effects in the north-east of the shipbuilding redundancies. That city action team used this sum very effectively to plug gaps in its ability to support services for local business and training in new technology. Its achievements demonstrate that the city action teams have an important part to play in accelerating progress in areas crucial to the regeneration of our inner cities and in attracting private sector support for worthwhile projects. Accordingly I shall be making £1 million available to each of the five city action teams in 1987-88 to be spent on the basis of a clear strategy that each team will be asked to prepare for local action.

The additional resources required for the expanded inner cities initiative and for the city action teams—an extra £10 million in 1987-88—will be found from within my Department's existing provision and, because we are committed to full value for money for Government spending, we shall continue to monitor and evaluate the contribution which these measures are making to urban regeneration.

One of the aims of our inner cities initiative has been to pool the efforts and resources of all Government Departments with a responsibility for our cities. As part of that concerted approach, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and I will be making a joint action for cities presentation tomorrow morning in London's docklands. This will be the first of a series of presentations across the country aimed at the business community, the voluntary sector and other opinion formers in our inner cities, to increase their involvement with Government efforts to make our cities better, safer and more attractive places in which to live and to do business.

The drive to help our inner cities is a key priority for the Government. It reflects our determination that all our people, wherever they live—north, midlands or south—should have the opportunity to share in this country's growing economic success. It reflects our belief in the younger generation, including those young people growing up in our multiracial inner cities, and our determination to improve their prospects. We have always made substantial resources available. What we are now doing is targeting those resources better to ensure that it is the people who live in our inner cities who benefit from our efforts. This initiative is designed to help inner city residents by helping them acquire new skills so that they can compete on equal terms for the opportunities which are increasingly becoming available; by helping them overcome the problems they face in setting up in business on their own account; and by helping to make our inner cities the sort of place where people want to live and where businesses want to invest. Today's announcement is just the latest in a long line of measures to promote action for cities, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): It is increasingly obvious from the bribes that are flowing from the Cabinet that a general election is imminent. It is obvious that it will be in June, whether it be on 11 June or 18 June. If the

hypocritical waffle that we have had from the Paymaster General today is an election bribe, it is the most miserable little sprat that we have ever had. It will not catch any mackerel and it certainly will not persuade anyone to vote other than Labour in the areas that he mentioned.

The Government are proposing to establish a further eight city action teams and are giving them all of £10 million to tackle the appalling problems of massive unemployment, bad housing and multiple deprivation. The Government regard £10 million as the solution to the problem. But what is the background to the problems of most of the inner cities in our country today? Since 1979 about £200,000 million has been cut from the rate support grant to local authorities. Indeed, the authorities mentioned in this statement have been collectively deprived of hundreds of millions of pounds of rate support grant. The Government propose only a further £10 million. Twenty-five per cent. of Britain's schools do not have inside toilets. There is a £700 million backlog of repairs to Britain's secondary schools. The council house repair backlog is rising at the rate of £900 million a year and 1,300,000 householders are now on council house waiting lists. There is a £1,700 million backlog of repairs to sewers and drains, most of them in the inner city areas of our nation. However, the Government have pledged to spend only £10 million solving the problems of inner cities.

Despite the smallness of the extra funds, I am certain that the local authorities of this country, especially the Labour-controlled authorities such as those the Paymaster General has listed, have shown themselves willing and anxious to co-operate in any meaningful scheme that will help to solve the problems of unemployment and deprivation in their areas. But can the Minister say whether he has consulted the local authorities he named in his statement and, if not, why not? Will he consult them in the future because in his statement he informed us that he will be looking to work with local people, local authorities and local industry and commerce to achieve a partnership of effort? Will he give an undertaking that the local authorities will take the lead role in any initiatives to solve the problems in their areas?

Under this Government, unemployment has tripled in these areas since 1979, most of it in what was once the manufacturing industry. With that increased unemployment has come increased poverty and hardship. The problems of those areas, like the problems of the rest of the country, will not be solved by gimmicks such as city action teams and job training schemes, but by the election of a Labour Government with powers and pledges to solve the problems of unemployment in this country. That is why we will win the election in June or whenever the Government call it.

Mr. Clarke: I suppose I am not surprised that the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) began by relating all this to elections. If he feels that further Government assistance to inner cities will do his party harm, I hope that his worst fears are justified. He began by saying that we are producing election bribes. I point out that this is merely a logical extension of the work that inner city task forces started 12 months ago and that city action teams started two years ago, together with the enterprise zones, the urban development corporations and the concerted policy the Government have been developing on inner city problems for many years. The hon. Gentleman accused me of hypocrisy, but in this case I think he is guilty of hypocritical cynicism about every good idea that comes from the Government about employment, training, inner cities or any other action.

The hon. Gentleman keeps mentioning local authorities. So far as I am aware, the sole policy of Her Majesty's Opposition on inner city problems is that more money should be given to Labour local authorities and that they should be allowed to put up the rates again. However, that has had the effect of driving away business and employment opportunities from a large number of the areas we are talking about.

Trying to put together inner city or city expenditure as a whole is difficult. However, in the past year the Government spent well over £700 million tackling inner city housing dereliction and decay. We are talking here about eight small areas, now to be 16 areas, where the Government will work directly on the ground with small groups of officials and will work with the local people on a shop-front basis, targeting money into those small areas. We spent about £80 million last year in the original eight task force areas and we are spending this year about £82 million in the eight new task force areas. On top of that is this £14 million in top-up funds to encourage new ideas and new approaches, and to help stimulate progress more quickly.

We wish to co-operate with local authorities and I trust that the eight local authorities in whose areas we intend to operate will work with us. We have had good co-operation so far. In the case of Labour-controlled Birmingham, for example, I disapprove of quite a lot of its politics and it disapproves of quite a lot of mine, but the fact is that we have worked together to produce a lot of extremely good projects which have benefited the people of Handsworth and Aston. When dealing with useless organisations that will not co-operate, such as the Labour councils in Southwark and Leicester, one has to go to voluntary bodies, the private sector or anybody else of good will to do some good for the residents.

I hope that the eight authorities we are now approaching will work with us. Our intention is to work with them. We have made informal soundings of some. We shall be consulting them and I look forward to working in partnership with the local authorities, the private sector, voluntary bodies and the people who live in the inner city districts of the eight cities I have mentioned.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Will the Minister kindly tell me where in Docklands he is holding his lush high-profile public relations exercise tomorrow? Would it be in one of the penthouse flats being made available to my constituents at no more than £375,000 a time, or would it be in the workshop of one of the 50 or 60 small and medium-sized firms that are presently being driven out, with their employees being put out of work, by the activities of the London Docklands development corporation?

Mr. Clarke: The conference is being held in the Limehouse Studio. Limehouse Studio is one of the places I have visited most recently in the docklands urban development corporation area. It has only to be seen to bear witness to the outstanding success of the whole idea of urban development corporations. It shows what can be achieved by attracting private sector investment into a derelict area.

As a Minister, I first went to the docklands when I was a junior Minister at the Department of Transport. I visited

[Mr. Clarke]

those empty expanses of water and derelict warehouses that have been created by years of industrial relations problems and a failure to adjust to change. I attended meetings where Labour councillors from the local authorities bickered endlessly about no solutions in particular for turning Docklands around. I have seen since what the Docklands development corporation has achieved. If the hon. Gentleman prefers Docklands as it was before the Government acted, compared with Docklands as it is now after the work of the development corporation, I can say only that he is advocating a policy of total despair for inner city residents all over the country.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the biggest handicap for the inner cities is the bureaucratic, negative and cynical Socialism practised by Labour local authorities within the areas mentioned? Does he also agree that the city action teams of Tyneside and Cleveland are regarded as a breath of fresh air, and that the extra million quid will be very welcome? However, does he also agree that that partnership will not reach fruition until local authorities such as Newcastle and Middlesbrough reduce their rates and promote policies that encourage business and job creation?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that his description of the role of the local authorities in the cities is true in most, if not all, cases. However, to a varying degree, many Labour authorities are, unfortunately, hostile to new ideas and resistant to innovation. Even where we co-operate with them, as we strive to do, I find that the process of decision-making within the local government machine is distressingly slow. Nevertheless, I concede that I can cite examples of Labour-controlled local authorities with which it is possible to work. We shall be striving to work with local authorities of whatever political complexion in the eight places I have mentioned.

I agree that rates are particularly destructive to the development of new business. A restraint on rate levels in the cities will be an enormous advantage in attracting new investment. Rate capping was about the only good news that businesses had in some of those boroughs and it is the only thing that is making it possible to attract new business into them now.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Paymaster General aware that no areas have suffered more grievously under this Government than the inner cities? In my constituency, unemployment has gone up by over 300 per cent. Inner cities have suffered in particular by losing large sums of rate support grant. My borough of Newham has been robbed of more than £100 million since the Government have been in office. Around the country, many hundreds of millions of pounds of rate support grant has been lost. Is he aware that the puny £8 million that he announced last year and the £10 million he has announced today are derisory by contrast? Is he also aware that his press conference tomorrow will be seen as an insulting election gimmick, and that what we really need is a partnership between Government and local authorities—not making war on the local authorities—to bring back enterprise and employment? In the inner cities we need a major housing programme, rather than a cut in expenditure on public sector housing by 60 per cent., which is what the Government have done.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman confirms what I said to his hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans). As far as I can understand it, Labour party policy is that the amount of rate support grant should be increased to allow Labour local authorities to go back to spending money at whatever level they wish, and that they should be allowed to put the rates up again. That is just about the Labour party's policy, full stop. When it comes to the work of urban regeneration and the figures quoted by the hon. Gentleman, I remind him that the urban programme, for which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction who is sitting alongside me is responsible, has trebled in real terms during the lifetime of the Government. A total of 75 per cent. of that money comes from central Government and it is making a big contribution to the regeneration of local areas. The Government must work directly. It is no good saying that our only contact with the cities must be through Labour local authorities, which must have money given to them and be left to get on with the job. I am afraid that far too many of them show that, left to themselves, they cannot get on with the job. Nevertheless, partnership with them is what we wish to achieve.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend can find £10 million for the problems of the inner cities. However, would he not have thought that there are other parts of the United Kingdom that have greater priorities, where people are being murdered by the day? Would not the Northern Ireland Office be better off with the £10 million to spend on security in the Province, rather than to have to make expressions to the House of abhorrence, disgust and shock, which do nothing to save lives?

Mr. Clarke: Like my hon. Friend, I sat through the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Nothern Ireland a moment ago. I know that my hon. Friend has a close involvement with the affairs of Ulster and the problems the Province faces. I accept that Ulster requires considerable help in restoring its economy and giving people worthwhile employment and training opportunities to raise their expectations and hopes. I hope that I can persuade my hon. Friend that our initiative for the inner cities in England is not in competition with any worthwhile claims for resources in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Welcome though the idea and practice of partnership and the new resources are, does the Paymaster General not accept that there are still many other areas in the inner cities in Britain that require this sort of assistance and partnership? Does he agree that the major problems of our inner cities have been caused by the economic and industrial policies of the Government, particularly in the regions and the cutbacks in rate support grant that have hit many areas, not least my own, very hard in recent times? The cuts in rate support grant have made it impossible for the local authorities to cope with the problems of economic and industrial decline that the Government's economic policies have brought about.

Mr. Clarke: I accept that there are many areas other than the 16 in which this initiative will be operating and the five city action team areas that could benefit from a concerted, direct Government approach. We are working

on an experimental, informal basis in those representative 16 areas now. However, it is plainly our intention to apply any lessons we learn there throughout other areas. The agencies with which we are working—Business in the Community, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the Evangelical Alliance, many of the clearing banks, and the residents themselves—are, I trust, developing new approaches to a long-standing problem that needs to be tackled in many of our cities.

With respect, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman really believes that the problems of our inner cities are some sudden creation of the past few years of economic difficulty. Inner city problems have been growing in this country because of profound structural and social change for over 20 years. What we are now seeing is an attempt to tackle them by central Government giving a lead to every other agency of good will in a more direct way than we have seen before, and I trust that that lead will be returned. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's simplistic analysis, which Labour Members share, which is that somehow the problem has something to do with rate support grant and that if the rate support grant was put back we would not have any inner city problems. Giving more rate support grant to some of the inner London boroughs would make their problems worse rather than better.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The Minister was remarking to the House about the great successes of the past 12 months. Can he tell us whether that includes the inner city areas of Manchester, because I can tell the House that unemployment there is now standing at 35 per cent.? That hardly illustrates the success story of a Government who have been in power now for eight years. The Minister refers to finding the £10 million from his own Department's estimates. Can he tell the House where the £10 million is coming from? Does it mean that other schemes will be abandoned to find that money, or was it already in the Department?

How can the Minister say to us that finding £1 million for the redundant shipbuilders will help when there are thousands and thousands of redundant engineers? What difference will £1 million make when what they really want is jobs?

Mr. Clarke: Many good things have happened, and are still happening, in Manchester in recent years, and the city is steadily recovering. One of the major physical contributions that the Government have made is the new G-MEX exhibition centre which has largely been funded by central Government money. The hon. Gentleman should look next door to Salford and see what is happening in Salford quay and elsewhere. In the Moss Side task force area, with which this initiative is concerned, we are pursuing a programme with Selcare Trust to provide new engineering workshops for 75 people. In addition, bursaries are being provided to the Prince's Youth Business Trust in Moss Side. These are only the first of many projects that are now coming along to help the inhabitants of Moss Side and Hulme. Instead of simply trying to denigrate and run down these programmes, I hope that the hon. Gentleman and those who represent these great cities in England will see that they are beginning to succeed and that they will lend their efforts to encourage local people to co-operate with them as well.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement and share his disappointment that Opposition Members have not given it a better welcome, especially as so many of these problem areas come under Labour-controlled authorities. When can we see an extension of this excellent initiative to areas such as Bolton where there is high unemployment and where I am sure this initiative would be much welcomed? Secondly, will he consider widening the membership of his city action teams by including the regional director of the DHSS?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his condolences about the reaction of the Labour party. It is wholly predictable on this subject. Every statement that I have ever made as a Minister in the Department of Employment has been greeted by the Opposition with nothing but sneering cynicism coupled with no positive proposals of their own. There is merely an attempt to run down what we are doing. I do not find that a very encouraging approach to the problems of the inner cities.

I appreciate the claims of Bolton, and the selection of further places in which to experiment in Lancashire was extremely difficult. We tried to get as representative a mix as we could and we have now chosen Preston and Rochdale, with which Bolton might be bracketed. Any lessons learnt there can, I trust, rapidly be extended to Bolton as well.

Although the city action teams principally comprise the three Departments that I have mentioned, I take my hon. Friend's point that it is important that those responsible for the policy of other Government Departments should get involved as well, and to a large extent they do.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman appreciate that the devastation caused by the Government's policies is not confined to inner city areas? For example, South Tyneside — the local authority that I represent—has the highest unemployment rate outside Northern Ireland, and the total amount of money that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has announced today in his election gimmick is less than the amount of rate support grant that the Government have stolen from South Tyneside since 1979. Incidentally, South Tyneside is the smallest metropolitan district council in the country.

Mr. Clarke: I have been to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and I would not for a moment underestimate the appalling economic problems that it faces. His claim that they are the result of the economic policies of the last few years is, frankly, ridiculous. There has been a long-standing industrial and employment problem in his area. I have not announced a new task force for Jarrow and Tyneside today because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment only recently announced a new urban development corporation for Tyneside, with more than £100 million of new resources going in over the next five years.

The hon. Gentleman's claim that good news of this kind is all election gimmickry ignores the fact that this policy has been steadily emerging over the last five years, despite the sustained suspicions and resistance of the Labour party and other Opposition Members.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): All reasonable people will welcome my right hon. and

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

learned Friend's statement today and recognise the Opposition's comments as nothing more than sour grapes. I thank him very much indeed for including the city of Nottingham in the additional aid, because I know that, following his visit to our city, he was made well aware of the willingness of the public and private sectors to work together. I also add my thanks to my right hon. and learned Friend and other senior colleagues who have demonstrated that it is possible for a number of Departments of State to work together and join in common cause for the benefit of our inner cities.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and look forward to working with him in that part of the area that is in his constituency. He does not represent the entirety of Forest Fields, Radford and Lenton, but he represents enough of it. I shall certainly need his assistance. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and Employment and myself have been to Nottingham recently and have followed its affairs very closely. We tried to engage the interest of the local authority and local industry, and some of the things that have happened recently are an attempt to respond to that on the part of the people of Nottingham. I believe that, through the task force approach, we have already established that people will work with us and take advantage of the new ideas and resources that we can bring in order to turn round areas such as Radford, Lenton and Forest Fields, where the residents need further help to obtain skills and training so that they can get back into the economy.

Mr. Nigel Spearing, (Newham, South): Does the Paymaster General recall that a few minutes ago he either said or implied that the activities of urban development corporations assisted local people? Will he take it from me and my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) that the activities of the London Docklands development corporation mostly disadvantage local people—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It is true! Firms and people are being driven out by escalating land values and the arrogance and acquisitive instinct of the LDDC. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman goes to Docklands tomorrow, will he announce those features of his policy that are to the advantage of local people, and only those?

Mr. Clarke: I flatly and totally disagree with the hon. Gentleman's description of urban development corporations——

Mr. Spearing: In London.

Mr. Clarke: As I told his hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), it seems to me that he and his hon. Friends are advocating the conservation of dereliction and decay, presumably because that is the political power base of themselves and their friends. That is not the way to cure the problems of inner city London.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in much of the inner cities Labour-controlled local authorities have been part of the problem rather than part of the solution, and that one of the great advantages of the sort of initiatives that my right hon. and learned Friend has been taking is that at last they are attracting entrepreneurs and those concerned about building up business to come back and play a full part? Unless entrepreneurs are again prepared to take a leading role in the inner cities, there is very little future for such areas.

Mr. Clarke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. Unfortunately, in some Labour local authority areas, although not all, the activities of the local authority do more to exacerbate the problems than to cure them. The local authority can itself be part of the problem in places such as Leicester and Southwark, as I have discovered through the task force policy during the last 12 months. I agree with my hon. Friend that we must get the private sector, voluntary bodies and local people, much more directly involved, and the task force approach has succeeded in doing that. Clearing banks are collaborating with us in some of these areas, and major firms are showing an interest and helping us by working through Business in the Community. Well-respected voluntary bodies such as NACRO and APEX are working with us, too. Where a local authority joins in, that is all to the good and speeds things up. Where a local authority refuses to and simply creates difficulties, we must find others of good will who want to do something to alleviate the problems of the inner cities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must apply the same principle as I did on the previous statement. I shall call one more Opposition Member and we shall then have to move on.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is the Paymaster General aware that from now on it seems that the Government Front Bench will show a completely different attitude towards the inner cities because of the coming general election? Is he also aware that he, the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, and his sidekick, the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), who happens to be a member of the Nottingham city council, have been severely critical since they came to power in 1979 of what the city council was not doing? It now appears that the electorate will take notice of what has been said this afternoon and will bear it in mind in the local district elections. They will let the Government know exactly where they stand on this fiddle of money for inner cities.

Mr. Clarke: All the talk about elections has come from the Opposition, and I can only think that several hon. Members are gripped by a sense of panic about the consequences. From the hon. Gentleman's remarks I could not understand whether or not he supports the announcement of a new task force for the inner area of Nottingham. I await the reaction of his allies on Nottingham city council and Nottingham county council, but I am genuinely hopeful that they will respond and offer to approach the problems in a spirit of partnership and step up the efforts that we should make in order to improve conditions in that inner city area.

Security

4.39 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): It might be helpful to the House if I state that, having noted the comments made by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and those made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I recognise that there is in the House a very general desire for a debate on security matters in Northern Ireland. I hope that that can be arranged shortly through the usual channels.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take the application under Standing Order No. 20 first and then take any points of order.

4.40 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Prime Minister to suppress information about the disloyal and illegal activities by the security services and hence to mislead Parliament and the public."

My request arises from the report in *The Independent* this morning written by three distinguished journalists who have read the book written by Mr. Peter Wright in which he reveals:

"Thirty senior staff of MI5 were engaged in a politically-motivated . . . plot to hound Harold Wilson from office as Prime Minister in 1974".

I quote again:

"Assassination plots, burglaries and bugging of allies and enemies, are all described at first hand in the Wright manuscript."

I quote again:

"Plans to assassinate President Nasser at the time of Suez . . . are confirmed with first-hand detail in the book."

Because of the nature of these charges, the Government have used the courts to try to silence and harass the press and journalists who brought this matter to light. It is my opinion that it is much to the credit of *The Independent* that it published the article. Some of the actions were directed against Members of this House, including Harold Wilson and others, some of whom are still Members of the House. The article is the first direct evidence available which discloses what is in the book which the Prime Minister has sought to suppress.

My request for a debate relates not to the case, but to the evidence that has now reached us. For many years it has been suspected that this was going on, but the Ministers responsible were either not told or knew and chose not to disclose it. In either case, a serious offence was committed. However, we know that the Prime Minister knew the book's contents because she personally sent the Cabinet Secretary to Australia to get it suppressed. The argument that this was a breach of confidentiality was put about the real charge of illegality, disloyalty and possibly treason against Her Majesty's Government.

I conclude by stating that this is a matter of fundamental importance to the House, whose protector you are, Mr. Speaker. When you claim the privileges of the House, you ask that the most favourable construction be placed upon our proceedings, and nothing could be more clearly covered in that category than Ministers being accountable to the House of Commons. I believe that the Wright book, coming on top of other revelations, reveals a situation within MI5 and MI6 and its relations with the Central Intelligence Agency which amount to a threat to parliamentary democracy. I submit that the House must debate the matter. I hope that you will reflect, Mr. Speaker, that as the events that will unfold as a result of the book become clearer, it would be inconceivable to observers that Parliament should not have discussed the matter at the earliest possible occasion.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Prime Minister to suppress information about disloyal activities by the security services and hence to mislead Parliament and the public."

As the House and the right hon. Gentleman know, my only duty in adjudicating upon a Standing Order No. 20 application is whether to give it precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley) *rose*——

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not at the moment.

Rev. Ian Paisley *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sorry, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: May I tell the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) that, after the Leader of the House had risen to make his comments about a debate, I was not certain whether the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley was rising to raise his Standing Order No. 20 application or to ask a question. If he was rising to ask a question, I should have called him.

Mr. Molyneaux: I would like to thank the Leader of the House on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends for the suggestion that he has made, which is agreeable to us. In the light of that, with your leave, Mr. Speaker, I shall not now proceed to make application for a debate under Standing Order No. 20.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking points of order now. However, in fairness to the House, I will take any questions to the Leader of the House on his statement about the change of business. If the point of order from the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is encompassed within that, he may ask his question of the Leader of the House.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I find myself in some difficulty. I wanted to ask you, Sir, what I do as a Member of this House when members of the security forces have planned

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

to discredit and assassinate me. What do I do under those circumstances? Do I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, for protection? On the other matter—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member wants to stand up and say something, let him stand up and not remain seated.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should put a question to the Leader of the House.

Rev. Ian Paisley: My other point is that today, in the House, we heard a statement which can only lead to grave fears on behalf of many people in Northern Ireland. This House was deliberately misled by the Secretary of State. I want to say that the sooner that we have a debate——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his point. No hon. Member from either side of the House deliberately misleads this House. We are all right hon. and hon. Members.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order No. 20 application—Rev. William McCrea.

Mr. Dalyell: I have a question.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a question for the Leader of the House on the Northern Ireland statement?

Mr. Dalyell: My question relates to parliamentary business in relation to one of our former colleagues, Lord Glenamara, whose position is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he cannot ask a question except on the statement that was made. I will hear the Standing Order No. 20 application.

Mr. Dalyell: It was on that business statement.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a very mundane level, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will take account of the fact that there are some local elections in the fairly near future. I hope that, when determining the time and date of the debate, he will bear in mind that many English Unionists might care to take part in it. Thursday 7 May would not be an appropriate date.

Mr. Biffen: I am certain that that will be one of the factors to be considered by the usual channels.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): On the statement made by the Leader of the House, may I state that it would be my wish, and the wish of my constituents and of the people of Northern Ireland, that a debate should take place immediately. None the less, I am glad to note that the Government have acceded to the request of the Members from Northern Ireland and agreed to the debate.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order in their normal place after the Standing Order No. 20 applications.

Mr. Heffer: But it is in relation to the statement.

Mr. Speaker: Then do not raise a point of order; ask a question.

Mr. Heffer: The question is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions on this matter must be addressed to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Heffer: But you have got them mixed up, haven't you?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did get them mixed up; that is why I went back and called questions to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Heffer: Well then, let us get back to this afterwards.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear it later.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it relate to the Irish statement?

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, it does. As the Leader of the House made a judgment about the importance of debating the situation on Northern Ireland, is it not a matter for comparative judgment—and equally important—that we debate the issue raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I find it remarkable that we are now asking questions of the Leader of the House, who has not replied to a single one of the questions that have been raised. It is a cock-eyed state of affairs. I want to ask him this: when he arranges the debate on Northern Ireland, will he make sure that it does not conflict with one of the many requests that will be made under Standing Order No. 20 for a debate on the scandal that emerged today in *The Independent* and other newspapers in relation to MI5 and all the rest of it? Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I believe that it is necessary for Labour Members to expose what has taken place with these so-called spycatchers and all the rest——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is wide of the question.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is this a question to the Leader of the House?

Mr. Gow: Yes. Can my right hon. Friend say whether the forthcoming debate on Northern Ireland will be a half-day debate or a whole-day debate?

Mr. Biffen: That matter will be considered by the usual channels.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not a point of order—a question to the Leader of the House?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, a question to the Leader of the House. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us an assurance that the debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the lack of security in Northern Ireland will be held before the general election?

Mr. Biffen: I shall ensure that the usual channels consider that observation among all others.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the terrorist murders committed by the IRA in my Mid-Ulster constituency which have resulted in a civilian being buried and a UDR man brutally murdered since the House rose on Friday last."

On behalf of the family of a UDR man who live in my constituency, may I say that I am deeply hurt that the Secretary of State came to the House today and failed to say that the last person to be murdered in Ulster was a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment. He was forgotten about and not mentioned, and I believe that that was absolutely disgraceful. Indeed, the Secretary of State should apologise to the widow and the two children, who have suffered because of a dastardly and brutal murder by the sewer crawlers of the IRA.

Many hon. Members have said today that they sympathise. In all the years since the troubles started in the Province, how many Members of Parliament have been across to Ulster, taken a widow by the hand and sympathised with her and her children after another brutal murder by the IRA? There is a widow sitting in my constituency today, but not one Minister will be present to sympathise with her. I have a message from that widow to the Secretary of State. He can keep his officials from her door—she does not want to see them. She said, "He is no good to me; he is no good to my children; he is no good to the widows of the RUC men; he is no good to the widows of the UDR; he is no good to the orphans—until he stops talking and starts acting against the murderers and puts them where they belong—six feet under." Then my constituents will listen to the Secretary of State. We are looking not for words, but for action against the sewer crawlers of Republican terrorism.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the terrorist murders committed by the IRA in the Mid-Ulster constituency which have resulted in a civilian being buried and a UDR man brutally murdered since the House rose last Friday."

I have listened—*[Interruption.]* Order. I have listened with deep concern to what the hon. Gentleman said on behalf of his constituents, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Later—

Mr. Heffer: I wanted to ask you something, Mr. Speaker, arising from what my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said. I do not challenge your ruling, but you were careful to say that you could not make a decision today for a debate tomorrow. Are you saying that if this matter—it is of the greatest importance to the future of the country that the security services should not be involved in trying to undermine an elected Government—is raised tomorrow or the day after, it will be given greater consideration than it has been given today? It is vital that the nation should debate this matter which is an undermining of our democratic way of life.

Mr. Winnick: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, all right.

Mr. Winnick: It has been reported in the press that the Attorney-General was considering taking the matter of what has appeared in *The Independent* to court. As you will be the first to recognise, Mr. Speaker, you are first and foremost the custodian of parliamentary democracy and the rights of this House. If it is true, as Mr. Wright has alleged, that up to 30 MI5 officers were engaged in the worst form of treachery — the overthrow of a democratically elected Government—and were conspiring to undermine and destroy a Prime Minister, surely this must be a matter of deep concern.

If it was alleged that the general council of the TUC had been conspiring to carry out assassinations or to destroy a democratically elected Government by treachery and subversion, Conservative Members would not hesitate constantly to urge that the matter should be debated. These events did not take place 300 or 100 years ago but took place within the last 10 or 12 years. Mr. Wright has left MI5, but if it is true that these events took place and if it is true, as stated, that a number of those who conspired to commit treachery remain in MI5, is it not a matter of the utmost importance that, as my right hon. and hon. Friends have urged, this matter should be debated as quickly as possible and before the general election?

Mr. Dalyell *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Is this on the same point?

Mr. Dalyell: On the same issue. It is a direct question to you, Mr. Speaker. You will understand that, arising out of what has been written in relation to the Wright situation, we are in a new position in relation to the sub judice rule. May I ask for some guidance about how you intend to interpret the sub judice rule now that it has really been breached by a coach and four?

May I also ask whether there should be a statement about the position of the Security Commission, because there is certainly reference to the fact that the Security Commission has been impotent? Because I think that it is the business of the Chair, perhaps later today you could give a considered statement about the sub judice rule that you normally and legitimately adopt.

Mr. Skinner *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Is this on the same point?

Mr. Skinner: Yes. It is linked to what has been asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), that here we are with the possibility of action being taken by the Attorney-General against these newspapers. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has asked for a Standing Order 20 debate and that request has been refused. We are approaching a general election and it is clear that there is a cover-up of gigantic proportions. The last thing that the Chair should become involved and embroiled in is part of that gagging and cover up. I suggest, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member is not suggesting that.

Mr. Skinner: Let me finish, Mr. Speaker. I am suggesting that it will be seen outside by millions of people that this Government—

Mr. Speaker: Order! I am not having that from the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman should raise a point of order that I can answer as a matter of order.

Mr. Skinner: What I am saying is that in this climate and in this environment millions of people will ask why on earth the House of Commons cannot discuss a most important issue that has been revealed by sections of the

[Mr. Skinner]

the press. They will ask why we, in this so-called mother of Parliaments, this free Parliament that people talk about, cannot find ways of discussing it. All I am saying is that, if the Government are going to get the Attorney-General to stop this issue being debated, the net result will be that neither you nor anybody else will be able to ensure that this matter is discussed. All I am saying to you is to get on your bike and get it discussed quickly.

Mr. Speaker: Order. And I say to the hon. Gentleman that as the custodian of the Chair I am not prepared to be involved in political controversy. *[Interruption.]* This is a matter for the Government. It is not a question for the Chair. I have given my ruling about whether this matter should take precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow, and that is the end of it.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take Mr. Steel first.

Mr. Steel: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Chair is placed in difficulty because the Government have indicated that they are considering taking action against *The Independent*. This morning, before that was known, I tabled an early day motion suggesting that the current appeal that the Government intend to pursue against the judgment in Australia is itself now a waste of money. It would be extremely helpful to the Chair and to the House if these further legal proceedings were withdrawn and the House were then able to debate the matter.

Mr. Williams: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We all appreciate the difficulty that you face, Mr. Speaker, in avoiding being drawn into political controversy. The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) makes is a valid one. It is that acts of sedition are not matters of political controversy. They strike at the very core of the democratic system and you, Mr. Speaker, are the custodian of this House, the prime institution of our democratic society. Therefore, when we have clear and new evidence from people who were involved at the time that acts of sedition took place, then we on the Opposition Front Bench and our hon. Friends on the Back Benches strongly feel that this is a matter of such importance—not necessarily in a party political sense — that it deserves priority. We understand your problems, Mr. Speaker, but it is likely that we will return to this issue tomorrow and the day after and even the day after that.

Mr. Speaker: May I say to the hon. Gentleman and to the whole House, but specifically to the Opposition Front Bench, that they have their remedy? They have an Opposition day virtually every week — *[Interruption.]* Order.—and it is perfectly open to the Opposition to choose this subject for debate. I find it reprehensible that an hon. Member should seek to involve the Chair in a matter that is plainly one of political controversy.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Were you deflected from the answer that you were about to give me about the sub judice rule?

Mr. Speaker: As far as I am aware, no action has been set down in the English courts, and the matter is not sub judice.

Mauritian Citizens (Detention)

4.54 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the continued and unauthorised holding of 10 Mauritian citizens at Heathrow airport."

This is a serious matter. On 12 April, a group of 10 Mauritian citizens arrived at Heathrow airport in transit with the intention of travelling on holiday to Europe. They had valid visas for all the countries that they proposed to visit. They were stopped at the airport by security staff. They were strip-searched and handed over to the immigration service. They were then delayed sufficiently so that their onward flight to Brussels had already left, and they were then placed in detention at Heathrow. At no stage were they applying for entry to the United Kingdom, yet their passports were stamped with the words, "Refused permission to enter the United Kingdom", and the immigration service decided to deport them back to Mauritius, even though they had been booked on an onward flight to Belgium.

On Good Friday, the Mauritians' solicitor applied for a judicial review and was granted an injunction preventing their removal to Mauritius, but 15 days later they are still held at Harmondsworth detention centre. They have been refused permission to continue their holiday in Belgium, unauthorised stamps have been placed in their passports saying that they cannot be admitted to Britain — they never applied to come here — and their high commissioner, who has met Home Office and Foreign Office officials on the matter, has not received a satisfactory explanation of this serious state of affairs.

It is important for the House to debate the matter because those people are being wrongly held at the airport. No charge has been preferred against them, yet they have not been allowed to go free. It calls into question the activities and behaviour of the Home Office and the immigration service, in respect not just of this matter but of other matters. It is incumbent upon a Home Office Minister to make a statement to the House about what is happening at Heathrow airport, and it is important for the House to discuss this serious matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the continued and unauthorised holding of 10 Mauritian citizens at Heathrow airport."

Again, I have listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Westland plc (Select Committee Evidence)

4.58 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer you to the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry in February this year concerning share dealings in Westland. As the minutes of the proceedings make clear, on 14 May the Committee received evidence from representatives of Westland and of Lazard Brothers, its merchant bankers. At page 179, the representatives were asked whether they had any knowledge of the six mystery buyers of shares in Westland. Mr. Michael Baughan, director of Lazards, is recorded as replying: "No knowledge whatsoever."

Last week, it emerged that the Banque Dreyfus, which is one of the six mystery buyers, is a corresponding bank of Lazard Brothers. That information was not disclosed to the Select Committee, although, since the chairman of Lazard Brothers is a former Member of the House and of the Government, the bank might have been expected to know of the importance of the Select Committee and of any dealings with it.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to invite Ministers to note this expression of concern and to suggest to them that a full statement would be welcome, to discover whether they knew this information, when they knew it and why the information was not disclosed to the Select Committee on any of the three separate occasions when Ministers gave evidence to it.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a question of order. As the hon. Gentleman correctly said, it is a matter for the Government and for the Select Committee, and I have no doubt that his comments will have been heard. Now I will take Mr. Heffer.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Ordered,

That the draft British Nuclear Fuels plc (Financial Limit) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Orders of the Day

Consumer Protection Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point is not as controversial as those points that were raised before, but I put it to you that essential documents relating to this debate are not available in the Vote Office. As you will know, Mr. Speaker, one of the essential parts of this Bill is to repeal the Trade Descriptions Act 1972, an Act which was approved unanimously by the House. Hon. Members who have asked for the Second Reading *Hansard* of 25 February 1972 have been advised that it is out of print. It would be ridiculous if hon. Members were asked to make a judgment on whether to repeal an Act if they were not able to read the arguments about why the Act was introduced by the House in 1972.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I am sure that Ministers will continue to make available such documents as are absolutely essential for an understanding of Bills. That obligation could not be to provide every Act that may be about to be repealed, because some of them go back over the centuries. I am certain that if the hon. Gentleman went to the Library he would be able to see a copy of the 1972 Act.

Before I call the Minister, may I tell the House that I have not selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and his hon. Friends?

5·9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill originated in another place and was warmly welcomed there. It deals with two principal matters—consumer safety and misleading price indications. Parts I and II of the Bill are addressed to safety. The first provides new civil remedies for those injured by unsafe goods and the second concerns criminal sanctions against those who supply such goods. Part III extends the protection for consumers against misleading price indications.

Before I explain the Bill's provisions in more detail, I should like to say a few words about the Government's general approach to consumer protection policy. For most purposes, the best protection that consumers can have is that provided by fair competition in a free market. In general, that protection can best be achieved by letting business get on with the task of competing for customers, but fair competition can only be achieved in a suitable framework.

The Bill is addressed to two forms of unfair competition. Supplying unsafe goods is a form of unfair competition as it gives the supplier of unsafe goods an unfair advantage over a competitor who is prepared to incur the costs associated with ensuring that his goods are safe. It is also a particularly objectionable practice in its own right. Misleading consumers about the price that they are charged is also unfair competition. Fair competition will not be achieved if consumers are given false or misleading information on which to base the decisions that they make in the market place.

I should like to explain to the House the Bill's principal provisions. Part I provides consumers who are injured by defective products with a new mechanism for seeking compensation. These provisions implement the European Community directive on liability for defective products.

United Kingdom law as it stands provides injured consumers with two avenues for seeking redress—the law of contract and the law of negligence—but there are deficiencies in these two routes. Under the law of contract, only the purchaser may be compensated by his immediate supplier. Under the law of negligence, compensation can be gained directly from the manufacturer only if the injured person can show that the manufacturer has been negligent. Those anomalies in our existing product liability law were addressed in reports prepared by a Royal Commission chaired by Lord Pearson and by the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission. All three recommended that manufacturers should be strictly liable for death or injury arising from a defect in their products, subject to certain defences.

The European Community considered the matter over a period of 10 years and in July 1985 adopted a directive requiring member states to make provisions which follow many of those recommended by the three commissions to which I referred. Accordingly, under part I of the Bill, any person who can show that he was injured as a result of a lack of safety in a product will be able to secure compensation from the manufacturer or, if appropriate, the importer into the Community. He will not have to show negligence and he need not be the purchaser. The benefit to consumers is clear. I might add that it will also assist retailers, who are liable under the law of contract, by tending to channel claims for compensation towards the manufacturer who introduced the defect.

The general purpose of the directive is harmonisation. There are three matters on which member states may derogate from its core provisions, but we intend to take up none of those derogations. First, the directive excludes liability relating to primary agricultural produce. The Government do not intend to depart from this and, to my knowledge, no other member state has proposed legislation which differs from our intentions. Secondly, the directive provides an important defence for the manufacturer if he can show that at the time of supply the general state of scientific and technical knowledge was not such as to enable the defect to be discovered. This is called the development risks defence. Member states may derogate from this provision, but in my view to do so could stifle innovation, which would be in the interests of neither industry nor consumers. Other member states in the Community agree with our view.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): If my hon. and learned Friend is referring to what is also known as the state of the art defence, can he say whether he intends to invite the Committee to restore the original wording as presented in another place, which is greatly preferred by the aerospace industry and by other high-tech industries?

Mr. Howard: I shall be coming to that, but I have not yet reached a final view. I wish to listen to the opinions expressed in the House today, as well as outside, before coming to a final conclusion about whether the original language should be restored.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my hon. and learned Friend also consider the possibility of limiting the liability under this provision? That would be a great help for many innovative and science-based industries.

Mr. Howard: I shall be coming to that almost immediately, although I fear that the help provided by such limits would be largely illusory. First, however, I should like to complete my comments on the development risks defence as the principle of that defence may still be a matter of controversy between the two sides of the House.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): There is no one on the other side.

Mr. Howard: As usual, my hon. Friend is entirely accurate in his observation, but we shall await with interest the comments of the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Apart from the German law, which applies only to pharmaceuticals and which was in existence before the directive was adopted, no member state has introduced legislation without the development risks defence in it. Even in France and Belgium, where the existing law on liability does not incorporate this defence, the courts appear to provide a development risks defence in their interpretation of the law.

I should make one further observation about development risks. The House will be aware that the Bill orginally contained a slightly different formulation of that defence—this was the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow)—and that the wording was altered as a result of an amendment in another place. Some have welcomed that amendment, but others have opposed it. I wish to hear the views of both sides of the House before reaching a final decision.

The third derogation enables us to limit a producer's total liability attaching to a particular defect—this was the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls)—to 70 million ecu, or some £40 million, but I fear that that might lead to injustices when there are many claims and to delays in awarding compensation when there is a possibility of further claims in respect of the same product while offering little real protection to most manufacturers. Having considered the matter carefully, therefore, we do not intend to set such a limit and, apart from the special German pharmaceutical law that I mentioned earlier, no other member state appears likely to impose a limit on liability.

Part II is complementary to the Bill's product liability provisions and is intended to prevent unsafe goods reaching the market in the first place. There are already regulations which make it an offence to supply certain specific types of goods if they are unsafe, but inevitably this results in some dangerous products reaching consumers because there are no regulations prohibiting their supply.

The Government announced their policy on this matter in the White Paper, "The Safety of Goods", in July 1984. We propose to tackle this problem by introducing a new general safety requirement which will make it an offence to supply any unsafe consumer goods. It will, however, be a defence to show that the goods conform to an approved safety standard or otherwise achieve the same level of safety, and we intend to approve a comprehensive regime of standards for this purpose. This will give an important boost to the role of standards, thus improving the quality and competitiveness of British goods. Part II applies throughout the chain of supply, although there will be a defence for retailers who often do not have specialised knowledge about the manufacture of goods. We shall, however, broadly retain the existing regulations covering specific goods.

The White Paper also made proposals for the improved enforcement of consumer safety legislation. Those proposals were taken up by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and now constitute the Consumer Safety (Amendment) Act 1986. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his efforts, and that Act is consolidated in parts II and IV of the Bill.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): In consultations with industry and trade representatives about consumer safety, my hon. and learned Friend showed some sympathy with the views expressed by some retailers and, I believe, by the Retail Consortium, that a balance must be struck between retailers' and manufacturers' obligations and the need for consumers to use products correctly and not wilfully or negligently. Is he satisfied that the proposals to be introduced at a later stage will take care of that vital point?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to refer to those concerns. We have considered them carefully and are satisfied that the present language of the Bill more than adequately meets those concerns.

Part III is addressed to misleading price indications. The present legislation, which is contained in section 11 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and the Price Marking (Bargain Offers) Order 1979, has been widely criticised. Both provisions prohibit specific practices. This approach allows other misleading practices to slip through the net. The Trade Descriptions Act allows traders to "disclaim" certain of its requirements, and the bargain offers order is extremely complex, poorly understood and difficult to enforce. The Bill replaces those complex provisions with another general offence — giving a misleading price indication to consumers in respect of any goods, services, accommodation or facilities. The Bill also provides for a code of practice giving traders detailed guidance on this general offence. A copy of the draft code was placed in the Library on 20 November last year.

The House will no doubt wish to know what the code's legal status is to be. When the Bill was introduced in another place, compliance with the code was to be a complete defence. However, during the passage of the Bill through another place, the Retail Consortium, the National Consumer Council, the National Federation of Consumer Groups, the Institute of Trading Standards Administration and the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards — all those most directly concerned and now called the "Concordat"—presented an alternative package of proposals.

This package included a proposal that compliance with the code should not be a defence but that compliance or contravention should tend to establish innocence or guilt. We have consulted widely on the package, and we undertook to reflect the outcome of that consultation in the Bill. The consultation is now complete, and the opinions received indicate very considerable support for the Concordat's proposal on the status of the code. I can therefore tell the House that the Government intend to move amendments in Committee which will give the code the status that the Concordat seeks.

Mr. Dykes: Will my hon. and learned Friend go into that in a little more detail? I am sure that what he has just said will be widely welcomed, and not just by those representing the Concordat. Before the Committee stage, and perhaps now, could my hon. and learned Friend say whether the revised code of practice will be, for example, shorter, clearer, and briefer?

Mr. Howard: We shall be seeking to do what we can to improve the presentation of the code, and it may be that there will be some enhanced scope for that in the light of the decisions taken about the status of the code.

Part IV provides for the enforcement of parts II and III. It consolidates, with minor amendments, the relevant provisions in the current legislation. Part V amends the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. That Act is intended to ensure that safety considerations are properly taken into account before goods for use at work are supplied. The amendments will improve the working of the Act. The general duty to supply safe goods for use at work is to be extended to fairground equipment.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: How will it improve the practice to extend this to fairgrounds and to replacement parts of an article? Does my hon. and learned Friend realise that the Bill gives the Customs the power to stop essential replacement parts for a fairground operation that may be desperately needed to allow the machine that has been authorised and approved as safe to go ahead? Is there not at least a case for saying that replacement parts for a proven article should be exempted?

Mr. Howard: If the parts are thought to be unsafe, I should have thought that it would be in everyone's interests that they should not be available for use with all the possible dangers to which their use might lead. It is only if the parts are thought to be unsafe that the powers to which my hon. Friend refers will arise. Therefore, I fear that I cannot go along with the concern that he has expressed on that point.

Mr. Taylor: How can my hon. and learned Friend say that? What possible purpose can a replacement part be put to if it is part of a proven, approved article, other than to be put into that particular item and used again?

Mr. Howard: I understand that that is the contemplated use of the proposed replacement part, but if it comes to the Customs officer's notice that the replacement part, for some reason, might be defective or unsafe, which is the situation with which we are concerned, it is only sensible that powers should be available to ensure that that potentially defective or unsafe part is not put into use.

Finally, I come to a matter which I know is of very great concern to many hon. Members and in particular many of my hon. Friends—the Trade Descriptions Act 1972. The Act requires all imported goods, with a few exceptions, which are supplied in the United Kingdom bearing a United Kingdom name or mark to be marked with their country of origin. Early last year the European Commission renewed a challenge to the Act on the ground that, in its view, it is a measure amounting to a quantitative restriction on imports between member states, which is prohibited by article 30 of the treaty of Rome.

The challenge to the 1972 Act was the initial formal step in the procedure for infraction proceedings under article 169 of the treaty. The next step would have been the issue of a reasoned opinion by the Commission which would, to a large extent, have committed the matter to being brought fairly rapidly before the European Court of Justice. After careful consideration of the legal position, particularly an earlier judgment by the European Court of Justice against the United Kingdom's 1981 origin marking order, the Government have reluctantly concluded that the United Kingdom could not hope successfully to defend the Act before the European Court and that no useful purpose would have been served by seeking to do so. Indeed, an unsuccessful United Kingdom defence could well have been counter-productive since the terms of an adverse judgment might well have inhibited the scope for successor arrangements. Part V of the Bill accordingly makes provision for the repeal of the 1972 Act.

Many hon. Members are, I know, concerned about the potential effect on both consumers and industry in this country of repealing the 1972 Act—as, indeed, I am. As the House knows, in the light of consultation with interested parties, we have been considering the scope—consistent with Community law — for a successor arrangement to be introduced by statutory instrument under the existing powers of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. As soon as we are able to do so we shall announce a decision. I believe that the House will recognise that it is necessary to provide the power to repeal the 1972 Act when we have an acceptable successor regime. I can assure the House, as I have made clear in the past, that it is not our intention to bring into force the repeal of the 1972 Act until such time as the question of a successor arrangement is resolved.

Whatever arrangements are made, most British manufacturers will doubtless wish to continue to draw attention to the fact that their goods are made in Britain. The repeal of the 1972 Act will not prevent that.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will my hon. and learned Friend give the House a little more information about the successor arrangements, because some of us are a little apprehensive about them? Does he mean that that will be a new form of words that will effectively be the 1972 Act put in a slightly different way?

Mr. Howard: Unfortunately, I cannot go as far as acceding to that suggestion by my hon. Friend, because it is the substance of these matters that is looked at by the European Court, not simply the language. We shall be seeking to find not only a formula, but some substance that will protect the consumer against the danger of being misled by some misleading indication of the origin of the goods in question that we can hope successfully to defend before the European Court of Justice.

I assure my hon. Friend that one of the reasons why I am not in a position to identify this successor regime to the House is that we are determined to leave no stone unturned in our efforts to ensure that we get the most effective successor regime possible. For example, we are looking at regimes that have been adopted in other Community countries. I am determined that we shall not have any lesser degree of protection in this country than is afforded, for example, to consumers in France in relation to any similar signs of origin of goods that may be in force under French law. I am afraid that I cannot go any further than that.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Do I understand that this provision in the Bill to repeal the 1972 Act can be invoked at a later stage? If that is the case, and if it is the intention

to repeal that not immediately but at some future date, how does that square with our position vis-a-vis the European Court? Presumably, if we are taken to court, we shall be saddled with the 1972 Act. Therefore, we will fall foul of the court in any case.

Mr. Howard: The prospects are that whereas the European Commission would commence infraction proceedings if there were no legislation to repeal the 1972 Act, if this measure contains a provision for the repeal of the Act, although that repeal is not activated until we have a successor regime ready to put into place, those infraction proceedings will not be commenced

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Before the Minister leaves that point, will he say whether it will be Government policy to proceed with prosecutions under the 1972 Act?

Mr. Howard: That is a matter for trading standards officers, who are the responsible authorities for prosecutions under the provisions of the 1972 Act.

I am sure that the House will agree that the Bill offers real gains for consumers and responsible businesses. Both will benefit from the more effective operation of the market mechanism. Supplying unsafe goods and giving misleading price indications are clearly harmful to consumers. They are also a way of gaining an unfair competitive advantage over honest business. The Bill will do much to prevent both mischiefs.

5.30 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I welcome any addition to consumer protection law, whatever its source. Over the years there has been a fairly good consensus approach on legislation such as the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the Consumer Credit Act 1974, which was initiated by one party and taken up, modified and implemented by another.

We are in agreement with much of what the Minister has said. The Bill is a step forward, but when we look at the detail we see that it is a smaller step than we had originally hoped for when we saw it in the Queen's Speech at the start of this Session. For example, the Bill purports to protect consumers but, according to the Consumers Association and the National Consumer Council, it would fail to provide compensation for consumers in the event of another thalidomide tragedy. Inevitably, it will be seen by the general public as a mouse of a Bill and as having failed to deal with one of the most important cases that has arisen with regard to consumer interest and the interests of industry for many years.

The Bill is based on a European directive and is therefore the basis of legislation which is being enacted in various Common Market countries. However, it gives the British consumer — as I hope to demonstrate — less protection than the French or West German Governments have felt appropriate to give to their citizens. For that reason we shall be seeking to move various amendments in Committee, as no doubt the Minister would expect.

I notice that there is a money resolution on the Order Paper. I was very disappointed, when looking at the explanatory memorandum, to see that there are not expected to be any implications for public expenditure or public service manpower. If that is so, I wonder what the Bill is all about and what value it will be to the consumer.

However, if no further resources are forthcoming to meet the wider responsibilities, the quality of existing consumer protection will fall as the resources are spread more thinly over a wider range. Consumer organisations, and trading standards officers in particular, have pointed out that the present consumer safety legislation has not met the objectives that we all want. Various Governments have introduced measures to improve consumer safety. We have nibbled at the issue and that is why I welcome the approach of a general requirement for safety. Under the present legislation as few as 30 categories of goods are covered, but the safety requirement is being extended to the whole sector of the supply of goods. The Minister is saying that he will carry out this enormous extension without any extra manpower or financial resources, so one is a little puzzled as to what that extension will be worth.

The same applies to the misleading prices issue, with which I shall deal in more detail a little later. We all go into shops and look at newspapers and adverts which mention bargain and special offers. A whole industry is misleading the public in terms of the marketing of goods. I hope that that will at last be dealt with, but I recognise the problems that are involved.

In addition to that wider responsibility for safety there will, we hope, be an effective framework for the control of misleading marketing practices. How will we implement the intentions, as opposed to legislating for them, if our trading standards officers are to have no extra resources of manpower or money? It seems that there is more of a declaration of pious hope about extending consumer protection than a likelihood of delivery. Perhaps the Minister will clarify the position in his winding-up speech.

Mr. Howard: The right hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to address the House before I reach my winding-up speech. Perhaps on that occasion, if not now, he would be good enough to tell the House the extent to which he thinks that additional resources are appropriate and the proposals of the Labour party on that issue. I am sure that that will interest my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury when he is trying to identify how much the Labour party's programme would cost.

Mr. Williams: The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a rather petty debating point which is of no great profundity. I am making an objective analysis of a rather poor and pathetic Bill; it is not my fault that it lays itself open to criticism.

As to the provision of resources, I point out to the Minister that as consumer Minister in 1974 I set up, for the first time, a national network of consumer advice centres, provided resources for them and made sure that the local authorities were able to sustain them throughout the period of the Labour Government. Sadly, as soon as this Administration came to office they set about withdrawing funding, which led to the closure of nearly all the consumer protection centres.

In Committee we shall explain what we need to explain. We are discussing the adequacies and inadequacies of the Bill. By making a minor debating point the Minister does not escape the fact, which I have already put forward, that the Bill imposes enormous additional responsibilities on the consumer protection machinery, which is already creaking because it has been starved of resources since the Government came to office. It is expected to carry out all these extra responsibilities with no extra manpower or resources. It is up to the Minister to defend the penny-pinching attitude of this Administration. Equally, it is for

[Mr. Williams]

me to demonstrate that that is the attitude of this Administration. In Committee we shall deal with this and many other points.

The Bill waters down the proposals that the EC has put forward. Let us take the fairly basic sector of food and agricultural products. Nothing is more fundamental in terms of the interests of the consumer than foodstuffs. It matters to us as individuals and it matters even more to our children that the quality of our foodstuffs should be protected by consumer legislation. Yet it seems that the Government have made a significant change in the rules affecting foodstuffs. The rules in the EC directive exclude agricultural produce that has not undergone "initial processing", but those words do not appear in the Bill. The Government have adopted a different formula from that applied in the rest of the European Community. Under the Bill, there is an exclusion for agricultural produce that has not undergone industrial processing and even that phrase is qualified by a reference to the essential characteristics of the product being affected. I do not pretend to know what that means and nothing in the Bill tells us what it means. However, I know that it does not mean initial processing and that it is a major departure from the directive's intentions.

As there is no definition of industrial processing in the Bill and as the Minister in another place failed to satisfy their Lordships, I hope that the Under-Secretary will clarify the matter, because it puzzles us all. What is foodstuff that has not undergone industrial processing which has affected the essential characteristics of the product?

I assume that the Bill will exclude the chemical spraying of foodstuffs. Lettuce has a high absorption rate and sustains many of the chemicals sprayed on it. Will such spraying be covered by the Bill? Would it be covered by the directive? We do not know, and we should like to know.

What about the injection of cattle with steroids and antibiotics? Is that "initial processing"? It certainly does not seem to be "industrial processing". Again, we do not know, and the public are entitled to know. Are additives an industrial process? Are preservatives, colourings and flavour enhancers covered by the Bill? Would they be covered by the directive? We need clarification of such matters.

The National Consumer Council believes that the Government have deliberately created a loophole to appease the agriculture lobby and that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has sabotaged consumer protection legislation. It says:

> "We are adamantly opposed to the Government's extension of this loophole. There is real and widespread public concern at the use of chemical treatments to make foodstuffs look nicer, last longer and taste better. While the Directive leaves liability for such treatments to the court, the Bill expressly states that there should be no compensation under the product liability laws."

The intentions of the directive are much wider than those of the Bill.

Product liability will be closely investigated in Committee, because there is great anxiety about the subject. The House welcomes the introduction of product liability. It has been a decade in coming, but I recognise the problems that have had to be overcome. However, we have moved a long way from the Pearson report which stated unequivocally:

> "to exclude development risks from a regime of strict liability would be to leave a gap in the compensation cover, through which, for example, the victims of another thalidomide disaster might easily slip."

The Pearson commission was asked to look at the issue, and it heard all the evidence before stating clearly that the defence that the Government intend to allow should not be permitted. It might be said that the commission's judgments were perverse; we can all remember committees coming up with unexpected or unbalanced judgments. However, not only the Pearson commission, but the Law Commissions for Scotland and for England and Wales, the Bar Council and the Law Society have all come down against the defence that the Government are building into the Bill.

The National Consumer Council observes that no similar defence is available under French or West German laws. The Minister said that the courts had interpreted the law in France. The French legislature made a decision and the courts interpreted it. The day that a Minister of the Crown comes to the House and tells me that a French judge should determine how a British Government should legislate will be the day I question whether that man is fit to be a Minister. Therefore, I assume that that was not really the point that the Under-Secretary was making.

Mr. Howard: It is not the point that I was making, and the right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that it is not. However, it affects the extent to which he is able to rely on the law of France as a precedent. That is all.

Mr. Williams: The Governments of France and West Germany passed laws that they wanted to be implemented. The courts have given their interpretation, as our courts would be able to do. The Under-Secretary has said that he would be willing to start from the weakest possible position.

There is great worry on the Conservative Back Benches about one proposal in the Bill, on which the Under-Secretary says, "Because a court on the continent has interpreted the matter in a certain way, we shall not get caught in that trap, but will capitulate at the outset." The hon. and learned Gentleman says that adjudications that he admits differ from the intentions of the French Government should have an influence on the way in which we legislate for the protection of our consumers. I do not accept that view.

The NCC is a body of considerable authority, and it says that because a defence that is not available in France or West Germany will be permitted in this country, and because there are tighter rules about pharmaceuticals in the United States, we could become a testing ground for new drugs. I do not wish to contemplate such a risk.

Of course, consumer groups will argue for the widest protection. That is their job, and our job is to ensure that their views and arguments are fully considered. I recently met representatives of the Association of British Insurers, because consumer groups argued that it might be costly to have full product liability, but that the costs were insurable, and that the insurance premium could be added to the price paid by consumers.

I asked the Association of British Insurers for its views —I know that it has now submitted a brief to Members —following the lunch—rather the meeting—I had with

it on 10 March. *[Interruption.]* The association members enjoyed the lunch, but I enjoyed their company—I have a waistline problem. However, I must say that a very good mineral water was served. I asked the association to inquire of its member companies and the letter I received states:

"The enclosed note explains the general view on product liability taken by insurance companies. This is that they are, by and large, confident that they will be able to provide cover for liabilities under the new legislation for current limits of indemnity at premium levels which will have only a marginal effect on the cost of production".

In fairness, that is not what the association had been asked to address. The question was not what would happen under the present legislation, but what would happen if that legislation were amended in the form that was suggested. Thus, my objectivity is unchallengeable.

Mr. Howard *indicated assent.*

Mr. Williams: I am glad that the Minister appreciates that. The letter continued:

"There could, however, be a reduction in the amount of insurance capacity"—

the association did not say there would be non-availability—

"if the state-of-the-art defence were not included. This would particularly affect industries, such as pharmaceuticals and aerospace, which present a heavy development risk exposure."

Therefore, the insurance companies are not saying that that risk could not be covered, but they are saying that there may be some limit on the extent of cover.

Mr. Howard: That is the same thing.

Mr. Williams: It is not the same thing. For a company to say that it is willing to insure, even if that insurance is more limited than under the present proposals, is different from saying that the company cannot insure. I am sure that the Minister will admit that. What is available is insurance cover under either scheme, but the insurance companies admit that they would want some type of ceiling on the level of commitment.

If that is the case—I believe that we wish to obtain the best piece of legislation that we can for the consumer—we shall need to explore a series of amendments in Committee. We should have a genuine exploration of those amendments in Committee and get answers from the Government. We shall also seek advice from the various organisations concerned regarding the options. We shall certainly move an amendment on strict liability with insurance. We shall judge that matter in the light of the arguments that are put forward and consider whether we should adopt the New Zealand system. In that country there is a type of state system operating as back-up for compensation. We should consider the merits of that system. I am not sure whether it would work here, but we should consider whether there is anything in it that we can use to the advantage of British consumers.

In Committee we should also consider the precise wording of the defence. We shall need to consider such matters in detail. I am sure the Minister will agree with me that they are important issues and they are not easy to decide upon. I do not consider this a simple black and white issue. There are important arguements on both sides and we must have them rehearsed. However, I do not want to hear the nonsensical argument that it has become so expensive to obtain insurance in America that that means that Britain will follow the same route. I believe that that argument was put forward earlier by certain sectors of the industry, but it has now been thoroughly discredited and we do not hear it so often.

The American system is utterly different from ours. In the United States juries award damages that are often astronomical. In Britain awards are made by judges. I am sure that other hon. Members have dealt with constituents' cases and have shared their anguish when they obtain derisory damages for the death or maiming of a child. In this country damages are judged on the loss of earning power rather than on emotive issues. Therefore, damages in Britain tend to be far smaller than in the United States. In the United States there is a rather peculiar practice—no doubt the United States would be called the "market society" known as the contingent fee system. Under that system solicitors run around offering to take on cases at no cost to the person who is pursuing that case. Instead, the solicitors take a percentage of the spoils. There is a more litigious attitude in the United States than in Britain. Thus, the United States experience in terms of the cost of product liability has little relevance to Britain.

On the question of safety, I intimated earlier that we welcomed the introduction of the general duty. I believe that safety is a more important consideration than value for money. Value for money and misleading prices are important, but safety is the paramount consideration. However, I wish to return to the point that we debated virtually a year ago, but which is encapsulated in the legislation before us and in the Consumer Safety (Amendment) Act 1986. The Government, through their amendments to that Act—incorporated in the legislation we are discussing today—made it more difficult for consumer protection departments and trading standards officers to give the safety protection that the public need.

The Government insisted that trading standards officers should have only 48 hours in which to carry out their initial investigations of goods. If I remember correctly, the Minister was defeated on that issue in Committee by 11 votes to 2. He did not convince anyone—only his Private Parliamentary Secretary dared to vote with him. The PPS did not look happy at the time and I am sure he made a mistake at that time. The Minister's arguments were destroyed in Committee. The Committee asked that, instead of 48 hours, 72 hours should be given. It was pointed out that something might happen late on a Friday evening, and that the 48 hours would have expired by the Monday morning. The Committee asked the Minister to be more generous and make that limit 72 hours. In fact, the limit of 72 hours was in the Bill, but the Minister came along and amended it to 48 hours. The Minister's argument to amend the limit to 48 hours will appeal to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The Minister's argument fits in with what I was saying about the Minister's attitude to what goes on on the continent. In Committee the Minister said:

"we are are prepared to increase this period"—

the period in which it is decided whether goods are safe or unsafe—

"to 72 hours, primarily for the reason that that extension would be vulnerable to criticism as imposing an unnecessary restraint on trade and might imperil the legislation at the hands of enforcement authorities in the European Community before the European Court of Justice."

Therefore, extending the inspection period from 48 hours to 72 hours would upset all those nice people in Brussels.

[Mr. Williams]

However, the Minister could not tell us from where he had obtained that judgment, nor quote a document stating that that would happen.

The Minister then decided that perhaps that argument was not the most persuasive. The other reason that he gave for not extending the limit to 72 hours was:

"a longer period could lead to undesirable blockages and overcrowding in busy ports".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 30 April 1986; c. 12.]

I recall saying to the Minister that he was suggesting that, in addition to butter mountains, we would have teddy bear mountains at the ports of the United Kingdom.

The Minister's arguments were too preposterous to be contemplated, either from the point of view held by the hon. Member for Southend, East and his colleagues or from the aspects that I have discussed. The Minister is sustaining legislation that makes it more difficult for trading standards officers to carry out their proper duties to check the safety of goods.

In Committee we shall also want to discuss second-hand goods. One cannot expect the same standard from second-hand goods as from new goods. That would be illogical, but some consumer organisations have suggested amendments which they think are suitable. Those with the lowest incomes use the second-hand market and they are least able to protect themselves. I think of cases brought to my surgery of people asking for assistance in obtaining kitchen equipment. The Department of Health and Social Security will provide enough money to buy a second-hand stove, but a restored electrical or gas appliance can be unsafe. I know of at least three instances of people who have bought such equipment and found it unsafe or inoperable. In the House of Lords the Minister said that specific regulations could be used to deal with second-hand goods.

That is a slow and laborious way of providing consumer protection. The Department might have streamlined the system but at one time 102 steps had to be taken before an order became law. The system is not convincing. It is even less convincing when one bears in mind that many months ago the Minister promised that he would introduce legislation to cover second-hand gas ovens. I understand from consumer organisations that such legislation has not materialised. All that we have had is the promise.

I can understand the Government's difficulties in relation to misleading prices and the John Methuen case way back in 1975. The Government's attempts were disastrous and had to be lost in the system because the orders were impossible to implement. I am glad that the Minister has at least been willing to take advice on the format. He has explained his intentions this afternoon and we shall examine them constructively in Committee.

We shall also wish to examine protection for the pharmacist — I do not refer to the pharmaceutical industry. The pharmacists have requested a requirement that the name of the manufacturer should appear on a product so that the people against whom claims should be made are known clearly to the public. We shall examine that suggestion in Committee.

My final argument concerns the amendment that is not to be discussed and the repeal of the Trade Descriptions Act 1972. I note the helpful and clear amendment tabled by Conservative Members. They are doing their best to guide the Minister along the correct path. However, I have served on Committees with the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and I know how difficult he is to help. The Minister's argument is that we cannot keep the protection under the Trade Descriptions Act requiring that the country of origin be shown because eventually we might lose in Europe. I cannot imagine a French Minister taking that attitude. I cannot imagine a French Minister saying, "We might lose in the end so we will not fight." A French Minister protecting French rights would say, "We will fight until we have gone through the whole system." All that we have heard from the Minister today is his assessment that an unsuccessful defence might prejudice the proposed replacement regime. I find that a little strange. The Minister is saying that we shall pass the legislation and repeal the Trade Descriptions Act 1972, that we shall not implement the legislation but start negotiations with Europe. I do not find that impressive and I do not think that anybody will be convinced that the Minister is serious.

The Minister is saying that of course he will put something in place of the Act but that he does not know what it will be. It is not as though we are talking of something new. The matter did not come before him last week or the week before. I have letters from the Minister written last year in which he says that the Government intend to put something in place of the Act. Today he tells us that he intends to do something but that he does not know what or when or whether it will be effective.

The Minister was unable to answer when asked what would happen in the meantime, what the trading standards officers would do and whether any cases would be considered. If we approve the Bill it will be the law in theory because the repeals will not have been implemented. The Minister says that everything will be up to the trading standards officers and that they must decide whether to take action in the intervening period. How unconvincing can a Minister be? This is an arch example of passing the buck.

By the time that the Bill reaches Committee we expect to have clear explanations from the Minister of how he intends to replace the Act and with what. His attitude to the Commission has been submissive. He seems to be the Government's political football. He has been kicked around Japan and now he is being kicked around the Commission.

We shall not oppose the legislation because we think that some extra protection is better than no protection. The Bill itself is almost an abuse under the Trade Descriptions Act in that it is far less than it was purported to be when it was first politically marketed by the Government last October.

6.8 pm

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): As I view the acres of empty Benches behind the Opposition spokesman, I find it not surprising that the Labour party does not intend to oppose the legislation.

I shall be brief and refer to part I of the Bill which I am sure will reassure the Minister. As I staggered to my feet, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister might have felt burdened with the thought of opposition from this quarter, but I want to assure him that in principle I am in favour of consumer protection. Also, because we are members of the European Community, which I strongly support in principle — I emphasise the words "in

principle" — I am in favour of harmonisation. The greater the common ground in terms of economic and related law the better it is for the internal smooth running of the Community and for the Community's external attitudes to other countries. However, these general principles assume that European Community directives are always drawn up to the greatest common advantage. I am not convinced that it is to the greatest common advantage for part I of the Bill to be drawn as it is.

It looks to me as if those in the Commission who were responsible for part I drew it up for the benefit of lawyers. It looks as if it has been drawn up by lawyers for the benefit of lawyers. Within the concept of consumer protection, I am in favour of manufacturers being responsible for the safety and reliability of their products. Nevertheless, there is a limit. The idea, mooted by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, of liability up to a maximum of £70 million is not much consolation for a great many manufacturers.

I am the parliamentary representative of the British Scrap Federation. *[Laughter.]* It is very important. After all, scrap metal provides most of the raw materials for the steel industry, among other industries. It is the considered view of the legal advisers of the federation that members of the federation will be affected by the passing into law of the Bill's provisions on product liability. How far members will be affected is difficult to say because so much of part I of the Bill is couched in such vague terms that the interpretation of those terms will depend upon the construction put upon them by the courts.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that the Bill maps out two ways in which someone may be liable for damage caused by a defective product. The first relates to the originator of the product and the second to intermediaries. The second, presumably, is designed so that where products are sold to consumers by retailers who could not be said to have produced the product, the person damaged is still protected. That is not unreasonable. But it seems that members of the British Scrap Federation could be liable in many cases under clause 2(2)*(a)*, which refers to the producers. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister knows well, a producer is defined in clause 1 as the person who manufactured the product, or

"in the case of a substance which has not been manufactured but has been won or abstracted, the person who won or abstracted it",

or, where the product bears an essential characteristic

"attributable to an industrial or other process having been carried out . . . the person who carried out that process".

However remotely connected, that person could be the scrap metal merchant who sells the original metal, which goes through several manufacturing processes before ultimately it may be discovered that there is a defect. I see my hon. and learned Friend the Minister making a face at that proposition. I cannot believe that it is the intention of the Bill or of the European Community directive that such liability should exist, but, unless the matter is clarified in the legislation, the potential for lengthy and expensive litigation is enormous and the extra insurance costs for scrap metal dealers, among others put in a similar position, could be large.

I know that, rightly, it is the Government's strong desire to strengthen the service industries, but such a provision would be carrying that intention a little too far. Therefore, I trust that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will be able to reassure me when he winds up the debate.

6.14 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I welcome the Second Reading of the Bill. The current law is inadequate in several areas, many of which are addressed in the Bill.

With regard to product liability, at present the buyer alone is protected, not the consumer, if he does not happen to be the buyer or necessarily the victim of the product. Currently product liability relates directly only to the seller or the middle man and provides for compensation from the producer of the goods only if he can be proved to be negligent. At present, remedies are available only through common law redress and depend on finding fault in the product.

On consumer safety, at present there are serious doubts, especially in the ability of enforcement authorities to stop the supply and sale of unsafe goods. The misleading price legislation has been described as obscure and full of loopholes, so there is much to be done. Consumers' rights need to be strengthened considerably. The Bill addresses many of the problems.

There is general agreement that liability for defective products should be much stricter—that is, without proof of fault and not based on negligence. Of course, liability should include not only the manufacturer, but the importers and suppliers of own brand goods. However, there is room for further debate on some of the issues where individual states in the EEC are allowed to derogate. The most notable is the state of the art issue. Producers should not be liable for a defect if it could not originally have been foreseen because of the state of technology and scientific knowledge at the time of manufacture. The debate is focusing on the conflict of interest between victims and producers, or, to put it another way, between big business and the individual.

There are limited circumstances in which innocent victims of unforeseen disasters will remain uncompensated, and they will occur from time to time. Victims, such as those of thalidomide, which has been mentioned, will face the same lengthy delay of years, sometimes running into decades, the same complexities and the same legal wrangles that the Bill purports to avoid.

Companies argue that to exclude that clause would raise insurance costs and inhibit innovation. Thus, potential customers as well as businesses would lose out. So we are faced with the choice: do we stifle innovation or leave a huge gap in compensation cover? But there is no clear evidence that insurance costs will soar, as has been predicted. It is clear that in the United States, where juries are notorious for their compensatory awards, the problem is different. Parallels cannot be drawn with the situation here.

Insurers in this country agree that insurance at a modest level would cover that liability. It would seem sensible to consider obliging potential defendants to take out product liability insurance. Surely the cost of insuring against a defective product, ultimately and inevitably paid for by the buyers of the product, is a better way to deal with product defects than individual victims having to remain uncompensated. With major catastrophes of an unforeseen nature, such as thalidomide, surely the state

[Mrs. Rosie Barnes]

should assume some responsibility for excess risk, as happens in New Zealand, so that injured parties receive speedy and humane redress.

I return to the development risks defence. As has been said, France, Belgium and Luxembourg do not allow that defence, and Germany does not propose to permit its use in the pharmaceutical industry. Surely we should consider similar action, if not across the board, at least for the vital pharmaceutical area. In the event of the clause being retained, I am anxious about the possibility of the phrasing being diluted from "every conceivable effort" to "all reasonable efforts". The two are quite different and that could be a relatively meaningless phrase.

Another related area is the loophole that is currently provided by the insolvency laws. There is evidence that separate companies have been set up to undertake the manufacture or construction of discrete products so that, in the event of a defect arising, liability can be avoided by winding up the company concerned. That loophole must be closed and that practice must be stopped.

Another area needing further consideration is the exemption of primary agricultural products. Again, this leads to anomalies in the system and leaves potential victims entirely unprotected. I accept the difficulties involved in assessing the effect of hidden environmental factors that are beyond the scope of the producer. I accept also the difficulties in detecting the source of the problem. However, that would leave redress for the victims only under the existing laws of negligence. In this day and age, there are major concerns about pesticides, hormones, and the like in agricultural use. Responsibility must be taken for such usage.

We should derogate from the directive on that count, with the same assumption of state responsibility for cases such as thalidomide, in the event of a major environmental problem.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is the hon. Lady speaking for her party in her splendid and astonishingly forward-looking statement or for herself?

Mrs. Barnes: I am speaking for myself. However, the hon. Gentleman may be surprised to know that I am also reflecting my party's views.

Part II of the Bill clearly gives far greater protection to consumers—the onus to ensure safety will be put on suppliers—and consumers will not be reliant solely on enforcement officers stepping in. However, the exclusion from this section of second-hand goods causes some anxiety, and protection must be afforded in that area. Similar concern arises over the exclusion of goods for export. Surely there should be the same safety requirements for people in this country as appertain for those in other countries. Such a dual standard is quite unacceptable.

Finally, I would welcome the commitment to accept the Concordat on the review of the complexities involved in the misleading pricing legislation which would cause great confusion in its current form.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In complete good faith, and on the basis of the information then available, you gave a ruling just after Question Time, in answer to my question about the Attorney-General's role in the publication in a national newspaper, that as that had not been referred to the English courts, there was, therefore, no question of sub judice. It may be that events unknown to you have taken place that would cause you to alter that answer.

Mr. Speaker: That has nothing to do with this debate. However, since the matter has been raised, it is true that when I ruled earlier I was not aware that the Attorney-General had taken steps to initiate proceedings for criminal contempt against *The Independent* and, I understand, other newspapers. In those circumstances, I must regard the issues raised by the action as being sub judice.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you said in reply to my point of order earlier that the matter was being considered by the Attorney-General, surely what you have just stated would not stop hon. Members raising the matter at the appropriate occasion, be it tomorrow or any other time, during Question Time because you have previously ruled that, since the matter is being pursued in Australia, the allegations made by Mr. Wright can be raised on the Floor of the House. Therefore, I hope that the fact that the Attorney-General is taking the matter to the courts, because of what has appeared in *The Independent* and in one or two other newspapers, will not stop that matter being raised as, indeed, it was raised prior to what appeared in *The Independent* today.

Mr. Speaker: Previously, action was in the Australian courts. However, it is quite plain that, so far as *The Independent* and other newspapers are concerned, action is in the English courts. In that case, it would be sub judice.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Does that mean that the second Adjournment debate for which I applied to your office is, therefore, out of order?

Mr. Speaker: That is hypothetical at the moment because we have not got near a second Adjournment debate.

Mr. Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could I ask you not to give a ruling now, but to consider it by tomorrow? I realise that everyone has been taken a little by surprise by events. Would you mind clarifying the ruling that you have just given to my hon. Friends by tomorrow because clearly we need to know the extent to which the issue is sub judice? There must be aspects that we can still raise. I have forgotten the precise term that you used, Mr. Speaker, but, so far as we are concerned, it is the area of precise action that will be limited. There must be areas of discussion in relation to the Wright case that are not covered by the ruling that you have just given. It would be helpful if, by tomorrow, you could clarify that.

Mr. Speaker: I shall certainly have to consider that. However, I advise the right hon. Gentleman that if, for instance, the Opposition were to change the subject of their Opposition day tomorrow to include such a debate, I should clearly have to look carefully at the issues that could be raised in it.

6.25 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I assure the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) that the warmth of my congratulations to her owes little to the fact that I have

a brother and a sister-in-law who hope to fight at her side as SDP candidates in the forthcoming general election. On many occasions, the hon. Lady has shown that she is a persuasive speaker. Clearly, she is a charming speaker who, this afternoon, has also shown that she is prepared, at times, to take an independent line from that of her party.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Lady will realise that if one reads a speech word for word one tends to lose the interest of the House, unless one allows an intervention by another hon. Member?

Sir Philip Goodhart: As I was saying, clearly the hon. Lady is a persuasive speaker or she would not have persuaded so many people at the recent by-election to change their voting pattern.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the speech made by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) was one of the best SDP speeches that we have heard for a long time and will he disregard the caddish comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who should be ashamed of himself?

Sir Philip Goodhart: The hon. Lady's speech showed a considerable independence of thought. I agree that it is customary on such occasions to say that one looks forward to hearing the hon. Member addressing the House often in the future. However, on this occasion, one cannot make that customary reference to a maiden speech because it would be inviting Conservative——

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): It was not a maiden speech.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): The previous speech obviously made a great impact on my hon. Friend.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I was under the impression that it was the hon. Lady's maiden speech. However, for the sake of charity and chivalry, I shall not withdraw any of the remarks that I have made.

The hon. Lady quoted extensively from a brief that many hon. Members received from the Consumers Association. I agree with a great deal of the contents of that brief, not surprisingly, as I have been a member of the council of the Consumers Association for many years and am now a vice-president of it. I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to the Bill, but the association has two reservations about part I, both of which have already been touched on. I shall return to them, although I take a rather different attitude from that of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams).

The association's first criticism relates to clause 2(4) and the proposed exemption of unprocessed agricultural products, including game. Naturally, food is important and Lord Denning has recently reminded us that the whole legal concept of making manufacturers liable for negligence in sending out defective products stems from the famous ginger beer bottle case of 1932. My hon. and learned Friend who introduced the Bill on Second Reading with his customary lucidity was not a ginger beer consumer in 1932 and, indeed, he was not alive then, but I was both alive and a ginger beer consumer at that time. Fortunately, the ginger beer I drank in those days was uncontaminated, but an unfortunate woman purchased a bottle of ginger beer in which she found a snail and, being a sensitive female, seeing the snail in the bottle made her ill and she sued. The House of Lords changed the law on negligence, which allowed her claim to succeed, and the idea of tort and negligence stems from that case. Until then manufacturers were not liable for their negligence.

Today no one would argue in favour of allowing manufacturers to let snails crawl into ginger beer bottles, but do we want to extend liability so that anyone who sells a fresh apple in which half a worm appears also becomes subject to the full weight of product liability? My friends in the association say that it will be a

"curious anomaly that consumers—in the most literal sense—of some kinds of food, are offered less protection or redress than others."

That may be so, but the whole world of consumer protection is bound to be full of anomalies and its seems perfectly acceptable that people who buy fresh apples must expect at times to find that they have also bought a worm, and that people who choose to eat pheasant should occasionally find a shotgun pellet in their food.

I am also somewhat doubtful about the association's objections to what has become known as the development risk defence in clause 4(1).

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Surely my hon. Friend accepts that if people die as a consequence of eating apples which have been produced by a particular agricultural technique, the same product liability should apply as applies to pharmaceutical products? It is not a question of finding worms or shotgun pellets. If people die or contract serious diseases because of techniques of agricultural production which do not involve doing anything to the produce after it has been grown, surely the same liability should apply as applies to every other industry in Britain.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I would have thought that the use of poisonous insecticides, which is what my hon. Friend has in mind, was covered by legislation other than the Bill and that without the adoption of product liability as enshrined in part I of the Bill consumers would have ample recourse to damages in the courts. I do not believe that the use of poisonous insecticides will be affected in any way by the Bill. Obviously, that is a matter for the courts to decide.

To return to clause 4(1), as has already been explained, broadly speaking, this defence says that a producer shall not be liable as a result of the legislation if he proves that the state of scientific and technical change at the time when he put the product into circulation was not such as to enable the existence of the defect to be discovered. Clearly, this has particular relevance to the pharmaceutical industry and the Consumers Association states that

"it provides a gap in the law which might leave future victims of Thalidomide-type disaster without adequate compensation."

There is already a great deal of legislation that relates to the safety of medicines and the testing of new pharmaceutical products before they become available to doctors and patients. Meanwhile we must balance the possible risks to the consumer of a medicine which does damage against the risk that an effective, life-saving or pain-reducing drug will not be produced because the company thinks that the financial risks are too great.

It is perhaps worth noting that when the Bill received its Second Reading in another place Lord Denning spoke strongly against allowing the development risk provision and was in favour of amending clause 4. When the Committee stage had been reached he had changed his mind, largely because of a report in a newspaper about the development of an anti-AIDS drug by the Wellcome

[Sir Philip Goodhart]

Foundation. The main research laboratory of the Wellcome Foundation happens to be in my constituency. Indeed, by Committee stage Lord Denning was arguing that the Wellcome Foundation should be able to develop that drug, to experiment with it and to test it without being liable to any patient who happened to have unforeseen side effects.

These days a lot of official spokesmen spend a great deal of time and money warning us about the danger of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome, in particular Dr. Koop, the American Surgeon-General, who keeps telling us that this disease could become the modern equivalent of the black death and could kill tens of millions of people before the end of this century. Even if we think that Dr. Koop is overreacting, do we really want to put more legal and financial inhibitions on people who are trying to develop a cure or a vaccine for this disease?

I do not think that we can give any blanket exemption of liability to those who are involved in trying to find a cure for AIDS. After all, the number of people who die from AIDS is a tiny fraction of those who die from cancer or who suffer from arthritis. The AIDS argument, certainly for the pharmaceutical industry, has tipped the balance against those who wish to do away with the development risk defence.

When I last visited the Wellcome research laboratory in my constituency I was told, both informally and formally, that abolition of the development risk defence would be a considerable cause for concern. There can be no doubt that this view is shared by the British pharmaceutical industry. That industry has earned a great deal of money for this country in the past 20 years and has done an enormous amount to combat pain and ill health. Therefore, I hope that the Government will continue to oppose this attempt to amend clause 4. I am in favour of going back to the original wording of clause 4 in Committee.

I was slightly alarmed to hear how many issues the right hon. Member for Swansea, West intends to raise in Committee. We would have to be monks not to realise that a general election may be called in the next few weeks. This will put the whole future of the Bill at risk. I hope that, through consultation, we could reach some form of self-denying ordinance so that the Committee stage of the Bill is truncated and there is very little, if any, amendment to it. There would then be some chance of the Bill reaching the statute book, even if the general election is called in June.

This is a good Bill, even without amendment, and I would like to see it on the statute book along with the other important consumer protection legislation that the Government have introduced.

6.44 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I welcome the Bill and I will be supporting it this evening. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) will not mind if I do not respond as fulsomely to his speech as he did to that of the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes). I simply echo his hope that, in the event of a general election, some deal can be worked out so that parts, if not all, of this Bill can reach the statute book and be put into operation.

I was also very pleased that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister was not wedded to the amendment to clause 4(1) that was moved in another place. Because of those words of hope, I will focus my few words on trying to persuade him to change his mind, to remove the amendment and to reintroduce the state-of-the-art defence as it was understood when it was introduced back in December in another place. As the Bill is presently constructed, it refers — dare I say it, somewhat simplistically — to the state of scientific and technical knowledge at the time not being such as to enable the existence of the defect being discovered. No account is taken of the accessibility of the knowledge or the feasibility of its application. It is open to a number of interpretations and puts the development risk defence in jeopardy.

I will speak in favour of the state-of-the-art defence, for two reasons — one for the consumer and one for the producer. The consumer will suffer because he will be faced with vastly increased costs. The insurance bills will be very much larger than originally anticipated. In another place Lord Williams had a fairly laid-back approach to costs when he said that consumers would be quite willing to pay extra for extra protection. I do not know what experience the noble Lord has with consumers, but my experience is that consumers are exceedingly reluctant to pay any extra money. If a consumer has two similar articles placed in front of him at different prices, he will choose the cheaper.

In this measure we are also looking to remove the markings of origin, which will make it much harder to say that an article is made in Britain or that it is covered by the protection of insurance. The hon. Member for Greenwich spoke about modest costs. That is a red herring. I do not believe that the costs are going to be moderate; I believe that they will be extremely heavy. I do not wish to upset the insurance companies, but they are nothing more than high-grade bookmakers. When one takes one's few shillings and puts them on one's selection for the Derby, one hopes that it will win. One puts one's money on with an insurance company hoping that one will not lose—hoping that one will not get pestilence, flood or theft. If one does lose, one hopes that the insurance company will pay out.

However, insurance companies are commercial organisations, not charities. They expect a reasonable profit margin. If there is an unestimable risk on a new product, they will cover themselves accordingly. Therefore, if this state-of-the-art defence is removed, insurance costs will be much higher.

I will give one or two examples. Some hon. Members, obviously not I, will remember the days when electrical wiring was covered in rubber and a canvas sheath. Somebody had the bright idea of producing a plastic covering. Can hon. Members imagine the manufacturer telling the insurance company that he had this new idea for wiring and asking for cover? The insurance company would think how many tens and hundreds of thousands of houses and how many factories, hospitals and shops that wire would be installed in, and, if there was a defect, how much the incipient liability or cost would be. Insurance companies would charge an astronomical premium or say, "Just do a few houses in a trial area to see how it works. Let us see what it will be like after a few years."

Can anyone see our foreign competition, particularly in the far east, saying that they could not touch a product for

a couple of years because we were doing trials? Our competitors would be taking our ideas as quickly as possible. In fact, the Japanese do not even impose strict liability for ordinary design defects, as this Bill does. The exclusion of the defence is likely to be critical for our European companies as regards Japan and our other industrial rivals.

I know that everybody, rightly, mentions thalidomide. I do not wish to minimise the impact that that has had on the individuals involved. I am exceedingly sorry and they have my sympathy for the suffering the victims have undergone. However, we always accentuate the negative; we never look at the positive. Innovation has brought our citizens some advantages. In my constituency, there is a company called Astra Pharmaceuticals, which has produced a chemical called Beta Loc. It is given to victims of heart attacks. The company has discovered that the victims, having been given the drug, have a vastly increased chance of survival and their recuperation is very much quicker. It has also been found that the complications that follow heart disease are very much reduced. I have no doubt that there are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people walking the streets today thanks to the drug that has given them an extra lease of life.

I am sure that if the drug had been suggested for its new operation with the state-of-the-art defence removed and mentioned to the insurance companies, they would have said, "Steady, let us take this a little bit slower. Let us load the insurance and increase the field trials." I can assure the House that the graph of differences between those taking the drug and those not taking it is dramatic and the deaths from a slow introduction would have run into thousands.

We are a country of innovation. We are a country of ideas, and too often in the past we have been accused of not implementing our ideas. We have allowed other countries to exploit them. If we are not careful, and if we put too many burdens on our companies, we shall lose out in those areas of innovation. The consumer will lose out on cost and through the slowness of the introduction of innovations.

I have mentioned the consumer and my second point is the effect on the producer. I hope to persuade my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of that effect. I have no doubt that the removal of this defence will make the producer reluctant to bring forward new ideas and it is new ideas on which the employment and growth of this country depends. I can see the producers saying that they should keep on with the old methods and be a bit slower introducing new ideas. Our competition around the rim of the Pacific basin will not be as delicate. They will take our ideas and exploit them.

That brings me to a point that has concerned me regarding British companies for some time. This House tells those companies that they must have health and safety legislation, employment legislation and pollution controls and that they can then get on and produce their product. The House then says, "By the way, we are going to let you compete against products from other countries where producers do not have any of those obligations placed on them." I am not saying that we should remove those protections for the people of this country. However, we have to look a little more carefully at the methods whereby products come into this country and ensure that they are competing fairly with the British manufacturer and do not have an unfair below-the-counter advantage.

If the defence is removed and the costs of insurance increase, I can see other countries bringing their products into our land, and so many ways in which they could take a price advantage. It would not be beyond the wit of any company to set up a shell import company and move the product through the shell company into our land. If something goes wrong, the shell company has no assets in it. That could operate and would cause extreme difficulty. Some people might say that it could be followed back to the manufacturer, but I have to say that we cannot even stop counterfeit material coming into the country.

I have bought plugs and sockets from a reputable distributor believing that they were British made. They had the British kitemarks, all the patent numbers and all the "correct" origins of manufacture. Only when the plug started smouldering, burning and charring around the plastic did I realise that I had bought a far east cheap substitute. I am worried——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Was the country of origin marked on it?

Mr. Page: I know the path down which my hon. Friend is seeking to lead me, and I am willing to follow. The products said that they were made in England. That is the problem with the counterfeit products coming into this country. Without putting them to the test, they look as if they are made in Britain. I was fooled. The plugs and sockets looked to be genuine articles. I understand that even cricket bats are being manufactured in Asia and coming into this country with all the marks suggesting they were made in Britain. However, I feel that I have gone far enough down this road.

Until the world—I mean the world—has a uniform system of dealing with product liability and insurance, I sincerely ask the Minister to consider in Committee withdrawing the amendment passed in another place and reverting to the state-of-the-art defence as was originally envisaged on Second Reading in the other place.

6.57 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): One of the arguments in favour of an early general election is that we would quickly be able to cut the throat of this measure which is masquerading under the title of the Consumer Protection Bill. I am sure that if an action was taken by a trading standards officer to determine whether that was a satisfactory title explaining what the Bill does, the Minister would certainly be found guilty of misleading the public, because there is no way in which this is a consumer protection Bill. It is a Bill that will create a great deal of confusion. It will cause damage to consumers and remove major consumer rights. The only encouraging aspect of the debate we have had so far was the remarkably encouraging speech of the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) showing that within the alliance there is now at least a spark of interest in consumer affairs, rather than the alliance being simply a sort of political wing of the National Farmers Union. That was certainly encouraging and I hope that it will continue.

What are my objections to the Bill as it now stands? First, on the matter of development risks, I almost thought it was worthwhile, with the confusion created by the Bill, to see the rather ridiculous Confederation of British Industry — which occasionally sends us some sensible material—publish a paper, and pass it to Members of Parliament, which says:

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

"The wording of the EC Directive is unworkable in the context of a British Statute."

That is further than the CBI is usually prepared to go. Of course, the CBI is absolutely right. The problem is finding a proper definition of what is a "foreseeable" risk. Most people would accept that manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers have a responsibility for products that create risks for the public that can be reasonably foreseen at the time the goods are made. What is certainly not right is to have a situation in which people are held liable for risks that could not be foreseen in any possible way.

That argument has been well canvassed, and the views of the House are well known to the Minister. I hope that he will give two detailed answers to the question that I am now about to ask. Why on earth is he excluding agriculture? He must be well aware that if there are any real, genuine grounds for fearing that the public's health and safety may be damaged, it is because of the manner in which agricultural goods are produced at present.

The Minister is well aware of the use of new chemicals and the damage caused to our water supplies by the use of nitrate and other fertilisers. He must be well aware that excessive agricultural production has led to a situation in which people are at risk. If they are not at risk, there is no reason to exclude agriculture from the Bill.

Why was agriculture excluded? Is there any logical reason why agricultural producers should not be in exactly the same position as the producers of any other commodity? The Minister should give a straight answer to those questions. Would he be willing to reconsider the matter in Committee?

Secondly, what is the nature of the exclusion of agriculture? If, for example, a new agricultural process results in defective produce which at a later stage causes illness, rashes, death or some other kind of problem for the consumer, who is liable and in what way? Does the exclusion of agriculfure in clause 2 mean that the producer of the original chemical or pesticide is removed from liability in relation to the effect on agricultural produce? What is the nature of the exclusion, why do we want the exclusion at all and how far does the exclusion extend?

Does not the Minister consider that he has gone too far on consumer safety in clause 10(2)? I have been told by others who have had the privilege of filling my hon. Friend's position that there is a fanatical, go-ahead and keen group in his Department which always wants to ban everything. They told me about the problem of resisting this group. One example of its activities was the famous scented erasures abolition order.

On the other hand, does not the Minister think there is a danger that this envangelical group has got together to draft the wording of clause 10(2), because it appears to make individuals liable for accidents even if, after the goods have been produced, the consumer misuses the goods, does not read the instructions or goes against the instructions? Surely a producer should not be liable for injuries sustained as a direct result of people using materials in an unsafe way.

My third detailed point relates to clause 36 and fairgrounds. I hope that the Minister misunderstood the point that I made earlier, because he gave me a dusty answer. He must be aware that in fairgrounds a number of items are carefully tested and proven to ensure that the general public is in no danger. He will be aware that, because of this new legislation and the increased activities of health and safety officers and local authorities, fairgrounds now come under careful and strict supervision. The public is thereby protected, and no reasonable person would object to that. However, if a part needing replacement breaks down, is it fair and reasonable that powers should be provided to Customs officers to seize or detain the imported replacement part of an existing proven article based on their judgment of its safety?

Let us say that a gearbox fails and requires an imported replacement. Surely it is unreasonable for the Minister to say that it should be excluded, because it is a replacement part of something that has been accepted as fair and reasonable. If a replacement part of a fairground ride is not used for that purpose, is there anything else for which it can reasonably be used, and is it not fair and reasonable that it should be admitted if it is an integral part of an existing proven article?

The Minister will be aware that fairgrounds have difficulty surviving these days, and it is quite unreasonable to create unnecessary problems for them. A delay of 48 hours, 72 hours or however many hours the Common Market may decide to allow us can be vital for an operation that depends for its survival on a few days of good weather.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Apart from the fact that it is important to retain the state-of-the-art defence, is my hon. Friend aware that in some circumstances replacements come from a person different from the producer of the original article? In those circumstances, I understand that the defence would not be available. I am sure that the Committee discussion will be extremely interesting, and there may be occasions when serious legal problems will arise from this legislation. However, I have confidence that somehow we shall overcome them.

Mr. Taylor: As usual, my hon. Friend has studied this matter carefully and he is absolutely right, because we are extending to fairgrounds something that at present applies to other industries. We are concerned about maintaining the safety and protection of the public while not making life impossible for industry and commerce.

My main objection is that under the Bill the Government are repealing the Trade Descriptions Act 1972, which was unanimously approved by the House of Commons. I am sure that hon. Members will regret the fact that the Second Reading debate in *Hansard* is unfortunately out of print, but I gather from my hon. Friends who have a copy that at that time the present Secretary of State for the Environment put forward a passionate plea in favour of origin marking as a means of giving greater protection to the consumer, of giving the information that they require and of assisting people in making the right consumer choices. He said that that Act would afford greater protection to the consumer and general public, and he gave the wholehearted support of the Government. The Opposition supported it, as did the minority parties. Everyone welcomed origin marking as something of importance to protect and inform the consumer.

Now we are told that, reluctantly, the Minister will have to scrap origin marking. No longer will foreign manufacturers be obliged to mark the country of origin on their goods. The reason, we are told, is that the Common Market thinks that our legislation is unlawful. But if he

looks at the discussions in 1972, the Minister will see that the matter was then raised by Mr. George Darling and others, who asked whether that Act was in line with the treaty of Rome, whether the Minister had checked with the Commission and whether it was lawful. The answer was specifically given by the present Secretary of State for the Environment who was then a junior Minister in another Department. He said that there was no question whatever but that that Act was acceptable to the Europeans and the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Richard Page: Does not my hon. Friend believe that retaining origin marking is a sentimenal rather than practical gesture? Is it not now exceedingly difficult to discover exactly where a product comes from, as many assembly plants draw components from all over the world? Therefore, it is increasingly difficult to say that an article is produced in one country.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend may hold that point of view, but when the matter was rationally discussed in the House of Commons, every hon. Member supported it because it was thought to be important. Now that things are becoming more complicated it is even more important for consumers to know where goods are made. In the old days one could rely on trade names. For example, if a product was marked Ford or Hotpoint, one had a rough idea of where it was made. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) has said, now we do not have the slightest idea where an article comes from.

There may also be safety implications. I read a fascinating article the other day which gave details about Duracell batteries that are advertised as having a lifespan six times that of the average battery. However, that only applies to those Duracell batteries manufactured in Britain. Other Duracell batteries produced in Greece do not possess such qualities. According to the article and the Channel 4 television programme "4 what it's worth", those batteries are described as rather dangerous and do not possess the additional qualities of the British-made product, yet both are sold under the same trade name. If there was ever a need for the consumer to be protected, that need is greater now than ever before.

What changes have occurred among legal opinions with regard to the treaty of Rome? Why, when we were told that the Commission was consulted when the Trade Descriptions Act 1972 was passed, are we told that legislation must now go? What reasons do the Commission give for telling the United Kingdom that our goods must not be marked with their country of origin?

The first argument given by the Commission why British goods should not be so marked—as recorded in the excellent document produced by the Library—was that British regulations increased the production costs of imported goods, making them more difficult to sell in Britain. In other words, if goods were marked made in Germany, Italy, East Germany or Czechoslovakia, it would be more difficult for those goods to be sold in Great Britain and their costs would thereby increase.

The second reason that the Common Market has given why our goods must not be marked is that origin marking would enable consumers to assert any prejudices that they might have against foreign products. I often wonder what those who organise boycotts would do if we abolished origin marking. The Liberal party and others become involved in boycotts of South African goods. If Liberal Members were here tonight — instead of being completely absent from their Benches — they might realise that, from the passing of this Bill, it will not be possible for Liberals, Socialists, the Co-operative or anyone else to organise a boycott of South African goods because they will not know where goods come from.

People such as myself, for reasons which my hon. Friend the Minister might regard as irrational, do not wish to buy goods produced in Communist states, where there is forced labour, and where Jewish people are persecuted. That may be foolish. Perhaps I am not acting as rationally as my hon. and learned Friend the Minister would wish me to act. However, that is my view. Why the blazes should we be told by the Common Market that we should not have information about where goods are produced if the British Parliament unanimously decided that that was a good idea?

Some people say that we must be progressive and forward looking and that the Community's main argument was that we would be un-European if we gave British people the opportunity of knowing which goods were produced in different parts of the Community. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will appreciate that this is the vital issue. The Common Market wants to deprive people of the opportunity of making a choice between goods produced in different parts of the Community because it would be un-European to do that—and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East would be the last person who would want to be un-European. However, it is all very well for Germany to make such a claim. Germany originally raised the issue with the European Court. However, we must consider Britain's position in relation to Europe. We are not the same as Germany or France because we have a horrendous trade deficit with those countries.

When the 1972 Act was passed, Britain had a surplus in manufacturing trade with the Common Market of £55 million. It was small, but people still said that we wanted origin marking. We have a deficit in trade with the Common Market for 1986 of £10,000 million. That is a horrendous figure, more than three times the size of our deficit with Japan, about which we have heard so much nonsense recently and about which a great deal of discussion is taking place. Although the Germans may not particularly want to know where goods are produced, I suggest that from Britain's point of view the future viability of our economy depends on individuals who are prepared — all things being equal — to choose British goods.

Another reason why people want to retain origin marking is that some people — rightly or wrongly — regard the country of origin as a guide to quality, reliability and value for money. Some people, like myself, try to buy British when we can, not because the goods are always cheaper, but because, by and large, we believe that we will get a better deal and better quality and if something goes wrong it will be easier to do something about it. Why should we be deprived of that right by the Common Market, irrespective of the views of the British Parliament and people?

There is no point in hiding the fact that some people want to buy goods on the basis of where they come from as an expression or sign of their political views and prejudices. What is wrong with that? If we know goods are produced in countries where there is slave labour, why

[Mr. Taylor]

should we not have the right, as consumers, to discriminate against those products? If, as we find was the case in the Soviet Union until very recently, Jews are discriminated against shamefully, surely as individuals we have the right to know whether goods came from such countries. We should not be deprived of the opportunity *and* should at least have the right to know the origins of goods in those circumstances.

I had the pleasure of hearing our splendid Prime Minister the other day at an exhibition where she made a superb speech about better buying British or better made in Britain—I cannot remember which. However, I know that the Government support, with lots of money, lots of organisations that are concerned with better buying British or better made in Britain. What on earth is the point of the Government spending taxpayers' money or the Prime Minister using her very valuable time addressing a conference telling people to buy British when the Minister has introduced a Bill to deprive people in this country of the chance of knowing where goods are made? This is a retrograde step which we do not want.

The Minister has told us not to worry and that he will not abolish origin marking until he can put something in its place. The Minister will be aware that, on the basis of what the Common Market has said and of the decisions of the European Court and the Commission, nothing that is realistic, significant or of value can be put in its place which will not contradict the whole principle of what the EEC has said today. The Minister will be aware of the advice given by his Department. The Department has told people that it would be happy to consider any other approaches that recipients may propose provided that they seem likely to satisfy the Department's requirements of Community law.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend accept the words "Not made outside the United Kingdom"?

Mr. Taylor: If the 1972 Act is to go, it will be even more difficult to define what is made outside the United Kingdom. It would be very difficult for the courts to interpret that definition if the 1972 Act is not enforced.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister will be aware that his Department has written to interested organisations explaining that all the reasonable alternatives are regarded by the EEC as completely unacceptable because the EEC takes the view that a place of origin does not confer special characteristics. There is no way in which any meaningful alternative can be introduced.

The problem is, what should the Government do? Should they simply do nothing? Should they tell the Common Market to go and jump and mind its own business or should they go ahead and simply repeal the origin marking laws and let the Europeans make the decision for us? I appreciate that there is a danger that the Government may interpret this simply as an old battle about us joining the Common Market. It is not that kind of a battle. This matter is terribly important and affects one of the fundamental freedoms and rights of the British people. It affects one of the fundamental rights of the British Parliament to make decisions of this kind which, in my view, in no way undermine the principles of membership of the Common Market.

I hope at some stage that the Government will have a long hard look at the extent to which the powers of this Parliament are being gradually taken away and diminished, not by elected politicians, but by the non-elected Common Market Commission. We shall have another opportunity to consider the matter in September when the European Court will give its decision about whether Britain is legally correct not to apply VAT to new house building, protective clothing, protective footwear or to items such as gas and electricity for industry and commerce. The Court will tell us what we are allowed to do. That Court and the Commission are non-elected, but they will take the decision.

I hope that, on that occasion, the Government will at least put up the flag for independence. I hope that in Committee they will withdraw this offensive clause which gives the Government the power to remove origin marking. If they removed it, the Common Market would look rather silly if it took action to deny the British Parliament the right to allow our people to know where goods are made.

I accept that this is a quiet day. The moment the Opposition announced that they would not vote on the Bill, people disappeared from the building quickly. With the other things that have happened today, very few people in Britain will be aware that origin marking has been abolished, but, as the Minister is aware, these matters have a habit of catching up with the Government. I hope that he will remove the clause quickly in Committee and will let matters take their correct course. I very much doubt whether the Common Market would be stupid enough to use its battery of weapons to force the British Government, against their wishes, to abolish the principle of origin marking, which is an important right for every British consumer.

7.20 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has again indulged in his anti-European utterances. We are very used to them. We have the principle of tedious repetition in our debates. I always think that it would be as well to spread the principle over more than one debate, because my hon. Friend's speech was an exact repeat of what we have heard on many other occasions.

In referring to the disappearance of origin markings —if the Trade Descriptions Act 1972 is to disappear— my hon. Friend misunderstood the complexities of the changed world in which we live. Origin marks and trade marks are much more complex than they used to be in 1972. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) that, because of the multiplicity of manufacturing efforts and the interdependence of the modern manufacturing world, not only beyond the confines of the EEC but among the member states, it is easier to talk about the specific origin of a manufactured product than to judge it accurately. For example, there may be a crossing of frontiers in the assembly of a product between a non-EEC country and a member state. If a given percentage of the product is assembled or manufactured abroad, that sometimes removes the need to have an origin mark.

Another example cited by my hon. Friend surprised me. In the old days, when the quality of goods coming from Japan was low, it was disadvantageous to the Japanese to put the words "Made in Japan" on their products, when they were compared with the high quality goods that bore the famous description which made us all so proud, "Made

in Britain". One would like to think that that was the case nowadays, but in respect of some products that is not so. If Japan was compelled to put the words, "Made in Japan" on its goods—emerging countries, such as Korea, are also beginning to make more high quality, reliable goods —would that be an advantage in promoting British sales? I very much doubt it. We can all imagine the sort of product that I mean.

A combination of the present origin marking system in the United Kingdom and a Community system is likely to be the best result. That is why this provision is not one of the more difficult parts of the Bill. I doubt whether it will cause much anxiety in Committee, but I could be wrong.

The present position is different from the position in 1972. This is very much a changed world in terms of sophisticated consumer durables and many other manufactures, and the point now is not so much that manufacturers can put origin markings on their products, but that the EEC is gradually progressing towards a common definition of an origin marking system. We do not yet know whether it will apply to products imported from outside the EEC or whether it will be compulsory. I believe that the modern attitude will be one of acceptance of the words "Made in the EEC" rather than an insistence that labels should bear the words "Made in France", "Made in Germany" or "Made in Britain". Many of us hope that, by 1992, we shall have a unified trading market in which it will be wrong and, as the European Court has already determined several times, a restraint on trade and misleading for consumers still to have compulsory origin marks. The remarks made in the debate in the House of Lords and today—with the exception of those of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East—have been about right.

I welcome the developments in part I of the Bill. I shared the anxiety of other hon. Members when the Opposition spokesman, after 25 minutes, said, "I now come to part II." He then took almost 40 minutes to make a series of clause stand part speeches that would have been more relevant to the Committee stage. We should remember that there was a thorough debate on, although not many amendments to, the Bill in the other place.

I welcome Second Reading of the Bill and the balance of part I. Some matters will have to be considered in Committee, but for the sake of brevity, and because I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister wishes to reply to the debate, I shall concentrate on part III and misleading prices. That is apposite, because part III has been mentioned least of all on the debate so far. I should declare an interest not only in the EEC—increasingly in dealing with national legislation, we are considering European matters—but in the retailing industry. The Minister's remarks will be welcomed, and perhaps were expected by some sections of the retailing industry in general. He said that he was willing to accept the so-called Concordat approach of all the groups that took part in the series of discussions since last October with officials and Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry about introducing a proper misleading prices regime for the future.

Although this part of the Bill has not been mentioned much so far, I believe that it will not be easy to introduce such a regime and that this is the most complex part of the Bill. The House must be aware constantly that it is extremely difficult to draft consumer safety legislation. Just as the draftsmen think that they are reaching a correct legal formula, they begin to think that they are already creating new loopholes which clever, highly paid lawyers can exploit on behalf of their clients. It is almost inescapable in sophisticaed legislation generally; it is even worse in this case. But that does not mean that we should not try to do it, and the problem of misleading prices needs a fresh and determined approach, which the Government are showing.

I speak informally on behalf of retailers on what I believe most of them think to be correct, and I know that they welcome the measure, as they have made clear all along. As represented officially through the Retail Consortium, the British Retailers Association and other groups, many retailers feared that the proposed code of practice would be far too long, complex and difficult—especially for small traders and retailers—to follow realistically. They feared that they would be caught out constantly, which would be very unfair to them, even if it did not harm consumers. It was obviously drafted by a raft of officials, who had put in everything, trying to cover all the ground. It is much more important to create, as the Government do from clause 20 onwards, a correct definition of misleading prices and a general offence, which they can use as a powerful weapon against offenders in the future. Coupling that with sensible regulations, as was requested in the Concordat approach, and a shorter draft code of practice and a final code of practice would improve matters.

I had a letter at the end of March from a retailer representing the Retail Consortium. I think that the views expressed there would coincide with the views of many hon. Members about part III of the Bill. The letter says:

"The Concordat has sought to identify the principal areas of abuse currently experienced, and to provide a simpler way of controlling them. We believe that this alternative approach accordingly stands more chance of being observed by a larger number of traders.

We also believe that enforcement officers will be more easily able to proceed against rogue traders if statutory regulations exist in respect of those abuses most frequently found in practice."

It is interesting to note that that fits in well with what the Retail Consortium said in its official letter sent to many people, including Members of Parliament, on 23 April. Speaking about the Second Reading, the letter expressed a degree of optimism that the Minister would accept the revised approach because over 200 interested parties had been consulted on the Concordat and the Government's proposals. The letter says:

"We are optimistic that the Minister will announce that he has received a response in favour of the approach advocated by the Concordat, and that as a result he will table amendments to reflect the Concordat's proposals on the status of the code during the Committee Stage of the Bill."

I should like to recall to the House the British Retailers Association's official proposal of 20 February. This was the original Concordat document formulated after all the discussions. On page 2 the retailers argue strongly:

"The areas which the parties propose should be covered by regulations are:

the 28 day rule
recommended retail prices
introductory offers
worth and value claims
substantiation".

The 28-day rule is an extremely important and difficult area in which to try to ensure justice for the consumer in terms of misleading price announcements. The second point about recommended retail prices is also a complex

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

area. Introductory offers have given rise to many abuses over the years. Some of them are difficult to detect because they are very subtle. I refer to these matters now because it will help the Second Reading debate.

Although the Minister has left the Chamber — no doubt temporarily—I am sure that a note will be made of my requests. Perhaps when the Minister is winding up he will spell out more what he means about accepting the Concordat proposals. It is necessary to affirm that the details of that approach are being accepted rather than just saying in broad outline that he goes along with them. I understand that it may not be possible for the Minister to do that at the end of this debate, but it may be necessary to have it spelt out before the Committee stage.

Reference has been made to the possibility of a general election. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why there is an absence of Opposition Members. It may also have to do with the likelihood of no vote being taken at the end of this debate. Whatever the reason, their absence suggests a feeling in the House that there should be a formal, short Committee stage on the Bill. I share the anxiety of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East about that. In an intervention, perhaps a sedentary one, he gave the impression that that would not be a good idea, although clearly he did that for different reasons of content in the Bill than I do.

There has been a material and lengthy debate in the other place on the three main parts of the Bill and to a much lesser extent on the other parts. The House needs to be committed not only intellectually and emotionally, but in terms of practical detail to modern consumer protection legislation. I hope that the Bill, together with some of the amendments that we may consider in Commitee, strikes the right balance. We need to look after consumers in an increasingly complex world where products continually become more complicated and sophisticated, and we need a reasonable basis of comprehensible justice, fairness and understanding for manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers. If we can strike the right balance, which is difficult, and reflect the requirements of the European Community—which I share with enthusiasm—we will make progress. That cannot be done by way of a Committee stage that is just a formality, as a result perhaps of some deal between the usual channels that might involve wider political reasons.

7.34 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who was unquestionably made in the EC. That is firmly imprinted upon him. I am doing my best to become more communitaire, although between us I think that our brief knowledge of Russian could not yet be described as a communitaire activity. No doubt in his wish to enhance the Community he would like to see us walk in that direction. My hon. Friend spoke about the lack of troops on the Opposition Benches. I thought that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) was seeking to talk the Bill out. Then I realised that he was inspiring the invisible ranks behind him that had fled to their constituencies in the hope of saving their deposits.

I am grateful for the opportunity to welcome the Opposition's Deputy Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg). I hope that we shall see him do his stuff and that we will be able usefully to instruct him during the remainder of the debate. I also welcome to the Government Front Bench my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown). I hope that one day he will find himself in a ministerial position.

The Bill is of great interest to a wide range of British manufacturing companies. They have been through a tough time in the past few years but are now showing enormously encouraging signs. Manufacturing industry is coming out of the recession looking fitter, more competitive and more determined than ever before. It is right that we should protect the consumer from poor and faulty workmanship. British industry is foremost in wishing to see that protection. However, it is not fair to place intolerable burdens on industry because they have the effect of driving up costs and making industry less competitive than its counterparts in other countries.

It is especially important that hon. Members should not seek to use this House to make pious and sanctimonious arguments about improving consumer protection while at the same time imposing such burdens on industry and piling up hurdles between it and its markets. I noted what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said about the Department of Trade and Industry and the possibility that there is a nadir-like clique in that Department. If that is the case, I hope that the people in that clique will come to understand that they will do no service to the consumer by making even higher hurdles for industry.

I should like to speak about two aspects of the Bill. The first is product liability and the second is the country of origin mark. I declare my interest as a consultant to the Electric Cable Makers Confederation. I do so with considerable pride because that confederation contains some of the major and most successful companies in British manufacturing. If I name only BICC, GEC, Delta and Rists, one can immediately identify major British companies and success stories.

It is by drawing on specific examples of where this Bill impacts on industry that we can do a service to Parliament and, hopefully, help the Minister to find his way through the complexities of the Bill. He has been good enough to meet members of the industry who have expressed their concern to him. It is a vital industry, employing 28,000 people and with a turnover of £1,100 million, of which 25 per cent. is in exports. Approximately 50 per cent. of the industry's output, in the form of smaller distribution cables, will be affected by the Bill, so the industry has a clear interest in this measure. The Government have gone some way towards meeting the cable industry's concern, but my hon. and learned Friend should be under no illusions—the industry is still concerned about a number of items. I shall list them briefly today as they point to genuine problems that will be encountered if the Bill becomes law in its present form.

The first question is whether an electrical installation is a product. Clause 1(2)*(c)* defines a producer, but it is not clear who would be the producer of an electrical installation and whether the installation would fall within the definition:

"'product' means any goods or electricity and . . . includes a product which is comprised in another product".

One thinks, for example, of wiring in a house. People are taking on increasingly complex DIY jobs and often rewire their own homes. If a person sells a house after rewiring

it and the new occupant, wishing to hang a picture where previously there was no picture hook, bangs a six-inch nail into the wall and electrocutes himself by driving it straight through an electric cable, who will be liable? Will it be the manufacturer of the cable or the person, whether he be a DIY enthusiast or a professional electrician, who installed the cable? I hope that practical problems of that kind can be addressed in Committee, if not in this debate.

Secondly, with regard to unreasonable misuse, the Bill relies upon clause 3(2) which provides:

"In determining for the purposes of subsection (1) above what persons generally are entitled to expect in relaton to a product all the circumstances shall be taken into account, including . . .

(b) what might reasonably be expected to be done with or in relation to the product".

That is a very general statement. What might reasonably be expected by one person might not be the same for another. I understand that the Unfair Contract Terms Act provided for the publication of guidelines providing much more detailed information for industry. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister may wish to consider whether guidelines would be appropriate in this case, although it may be too complex even for that possibility. For example, if a person uses an electric mowing machine which runs over the cable and cuts it, is that unreasonable use of the cable?

The Government argue that these are matters for the courts to decide. That would be fine if things were as simple as that, but they are not. Companies may not be able to obtain the necessary insurance cover to protect themselves against what could be very substantial financial penalties. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West, who has just returned to the Chamber, mentioned that aspect. He stated very fairly that the Association of British Insurers felt that the existing situation could be covered but did not express an opinion about the possibility of covering the situation if the Bill became law. If I have got that slightly wrong, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will correct me.

Mr. Williams: I left the Chamber briefly to deal with some telephone calls. The association said, not that cover could not be offered but that the amount of cover would be limited. In other words, it could not guarantee the amount.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. That reservation is itself a serious limitation on what the insurance market can do. The CBI brief states:

"The Association of Insurance and Risk Managers in Industry and Commerce (AIRMIC), which represents those responsible for buying insurance on behalf of their companies . . . point out that high risk and high-tech research and development based industries in this country are having real difficulties in getting appropriate cover for product liability 'at any price'. They continue: 'If, as we know is the case, the insurance industry is not able to provide the cover that we need at present, one must question their ability to provide cover under a strict liability regime, let alone one without a development risks defence'."

I wish to put that point on record. It will be very difficult for companies to obtain cover. One area that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister may wish to consider concerns high-tech companies producing medical equipment.

It is not just a problem of insurance. We are seeking to impose on industry a more time-consuming measure. If these matters go to the courts, people in industry will have to brief lawyers and spend time establishing case law. The preamble to the Bill states:

"There are not expected to be any implications for public expenditure or public service manpower."

It says nothing about the expected impact on manpower in industry. There is a defence under clause 4(1)*(f)* for the supplier of a component if

"the defect—

((i)*)* constituted a defect in a product ('the subsequent product') in which the product in question had been comprised; and

*(*ii*)* was wholly attributable to the design of the subsequent product or to compliance by the producer of the product in question with instructions given by the producer of the subsequent product."

That is fair enough, but the cable manufacturer has absolutely no control over the ultimate use of the cable. He does not sell directly, for example, to a lawn mower manufacturer; he sells to cable wholesalers. I hope, therefore, that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will take on board the difficulties faced by an industry of that kind which wants to be responsible and which already exercises enormous care to ensure that its products are safe but which has no control over the end user.

My third point concerns the state of the art defence. I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page). It is vital that there should be a much broader defence, as was originally provided in the Bill. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister was kind enough to say that he would listen carefully to the representations made. I hope that he will take careful note of this one. The Society of British Aerospace Companies and other major elements of industry are most concerned about this. I hope that the Government will consider this in Committee and perhaps restore the original wording.

My fourth point affects not only the cable industry but many others. Producers in this country are at a potential disadvantage compared with overseas producers selling cheap stuff through importing houses in the United Kingdom which are frequently £100 companies. Export-import businesses are almost the easiest thing to get into if one is at a loss for something to do. One does not need much capital and one can set oneself up as a £100 company. Under the Bill, it will be the importer that the consumer who has been injured, or perhaps has lost a member of his family, will sue. What use will the Bill be in such circumstances? If the importer is just a £100 company, it can simply go bust and not pay up. British companies will be applying all the rules under the Bill while the foreign competition will be able to get off scot-free.

The argument about the origin of country marking was eloquently articulated by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East who, as always, spoke with vigour for Britain. While I welcome what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has said, the Bill states that the 1972 Act will be repealed. I do not quite understand how that squares with what he told me in my intervention in his speech. I hope that he can clarify that. This measure is contrary to everything else that we are doing for consumer protection. The whole emphasis has been on giving the consumer much more information on which to make a balanced judgment. That is what we believe when we say that we are in favour of the market. Giving people choice means giving people information on which to make that choice. The abolition of this requirement will deny the consumer information that he has at the moment, and that will limit his scope for making a choice.

[Mr. Howarth]

I am one of those who seek at every opportunity to buy British, and I am proud of that. Much to the chagrin of my wife, I turn products over to see whether they are made in Britain. If they are not, I will not buy them unless there is no British substitute. There is still high unemployment in the west midlands. We hear people in the south-east moaning about that, but they run around in foreign motor cars. If they want to improve the unemployment position in the west midlands, they should go out and buy British manufactured goods. That is the biggest contribution that we can all make to solving unemployment. However, the Bill threatens to deny us the opportunity to do what we can as individual consumers to support British industry and solve the unemployment problem.

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend has noted all the observations made from the Government Back Benches. The removal of country of origin marking is not acceptable to the British people. They see it as a manifestation of what they all feared when we entered the EEC—that power would be ceded from Westminster to Brussels. I am sorry if that offends my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East, but that is how people outside perceive these things. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will do everything in his power to resist this trend and to make sure that any successor arrangements are just as good as those that prevail now.

7.53 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I declare an interest as an adviser to the British Foundry Association, which has made a number of points about the Bill. In particular, it wants to support the state-of-the-art defence. As I said in an intervention, problems also arise under clause 4 and its definitions, which were changed in the other place. The British Foundry Association members have a problem under the new version. Where they have been involved in the making of castings to a specific order of an original producer and these wear out and need to be replaced, orders for replacements can and do come from persons other than the original producer, who may no longer exist. In such circumstances, the association is concerned that there would be no defence for its members, as makers of the castings from the original foundry. I should be grateful if the Minister would consider these points in Committee.

I notice that in part III, which is entitled "Misleading Price Indications", we may have an opportunity to come back to a point about which I have corresponded with the Minister. This arises out of my amendment to the Banking Bill. I was particularly concerned that there should be a proper disclosure of the manner in which interest is accumulated when customers of banks incur overdrafts.

I do not want to go into this in detail, because it is already on the record. I had a most helpful letter from the Minister — one that is worthy of a press release, although I held it back. He has conceded the principle that he will be looking at all this and that something will come of our discussions and correspondence. The voluntary ombudsman service has already stated that there are a number of serious deficiencies in the current system. I see no good reason why the manner in which interest is arrived at could not properly be disclosed.

I am particularly glad to notice that the definition of price of services includes the possibility of interest. In clause 22, under the definition of services, there is included the provision of credit, banking or insurance services. I am hopeful that this may be a mechanism whereby banks would be required to produce accurate information for their customers as to the manner in which interest is accumulated. I hesitate to say this but those who are interested might save time by looking at my comments about this subject made in the Committee considering the Banking Bill, as those comments summarise my position.

In its parliamentary brief, the CBI has said that it is vital, in the interests of society as a whole, that the development risk defence is retained and precisely worded.

I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation and I have taken a close interest in European affairs. However, the idea that we should automatically take on the precise wording of a directive fills me with horror. We must not assume, because it is contrary to the nature of a directive in the first place, that it is up to us to implement the objectives of the directive in its exact wording. If we were to do so, we would rapidly get into serious difficulties.

Our method of interpretation is somewhat different from that in the European Community, although when it comes to matters of interpretation before the European Court, we have to follow its method of interpretation. We should stick to the wording in the Bill as originally introduced. We should not take the European directive wording lock, stock and barrel. I have no doubt that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will have plenty to say on this subject on another occasion.

7.58 pm

Mr. Howard: I thank all hon. Members who have spoken in this interesting debate. Some have suggested various ways in which we might change the Bill to reflect the interests of either industry or the consumer. I shall comment on as many of the points that have been raised as I can, but if I omit any I apologise in advance and no doubt there will be an opportunity to discuss them on other occasions.

I remind hon. Members that our purpose in part I is to implement the product liability directive. That directive was agreed by all member states of the community and there are very few areas where we can make choices. Where we can make a choice, it is right that we should debate that choice. However, it is not our policy to go beyond the directive. Our intention is merely to implement it by the provisions in part I.

The main purpose of the directive is to reduce distortions in competition and barriers to trade throughout the Community by providing a common level of protection for consumers throughout the member states. I agree that this harmonisation is not yet total, but it is an important step towards that goal and we should do all that we can to ensure that the law relating to defective products is completely harmonised throughout the Community.

I now turn to the points which were raised by right hon. and hon. Members on part I of the Bill. First, I shall deal with the point which was made by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) about the extent to which the development risks defence might give rise to a repetition of the thalidomide tragedy. It is very important to clarify our minds and think about the relevance of that argument to the development risks defence in the Bill.

I have no intension of minimising in any way the anguish and suffering of the children who were damaged by thalidomide, or that of their parents. I question the extent to which the discussion of the liability of the manufacturers of thalidomide is relevant to any discussion on the Bill. A legal decision was never reached on the liability of the manufacturers of thalidomide because the case was settled out of court, and in the absence of that decision it would be irresponsible of me, or anyone else, to make a judgment as to that company's liability.

While I agree that the thalidomide tragedy was the impetus behind protective legislation of several types in many member states, and indeed was the major reason for the initial proposals which resulted in the directive that we are implementing through the Bill, we must be careful not to make unrealistic connections between that matter and the Bill. It is particularly relevant to note that there have been significant changes in the circumstances in which drugs may be tested on human beings or marketed generally in this country since the late 1950s, when thalidomide was first supplied. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) pointed out those differences.

The Medicines Act 1968, which in large part was brought into being in the wake of the thalidomide case, ensures that no medicinal product can be manufactured, sold, supplied or imported into this country, except in accordance with the appropriate licences and clinical trial certificates as to the safety and quality of that product. I doubt whether the thalidomide case is relevant to the Bill, and I think that we should concentrate our attention on what the development risks defence means in reality to industry and consumers.

Still on the development risks defence, I should say something about insurance cover. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West, and many other hon. Members who contributed to the debate, said something about the relevance of insurance cover. It is true that the view of the Association of British Insurers is that, as long as the development risks defence is maintained, the Bill as a whole should not lead, and is not expected to lead, to a great increase in the cost of insurance.

The ABI went on to say—the right hon. Member for Swansea, West mentioned this, but I am not sure that he fully and properly conveyed the implications of its second point—that if the development risks defence is taken out of the Bill, the availability of insurance would be reduced. That does not necessarily mean that there will be a limit to the liability which might be covered by insurance in certain circumstances; it could go to the question whether cover could be obtained at all. That is a serious matter; that is what the availability of insurance means; that is what is called into question if the development risks defence is removed.

To suggest, as the hon. Member for Greenwich did, that this was a question of a modest increase was wholly to misrepresent the nature of the risks in relation to the availability of insurance which manufacturers of products in this country would run if the development risks defence were removed from the Bill. That is a matter to which I attach a great deal of importance.

I now turn to the exclusion from the Bill of agricultural products. This point was raised, with his usual forcefulness, by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), who asked a number of questions about it. I shall also attempt to deal with the difference between initial processing and industrial processing, which was raised by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West.

The directive excludes liability for primary agricultural products, and the Government are implementing the directive in this respect. It is true that member states are entitled to derogate from this provision but, so far as we are aware, no other member state intends to make use of that derogation to include liability for primary agricultural products, and for us to do so would not only fly in the face of our aim of eventual harmonisation but could place United Kingdom farmers at a disadvantage throughout the Community. I hope that that would not commend itself to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. That is an important reason behind our decision not to take advantage of this derogation.

Mr. Williams: Unfortunately, my notes are with *Hansard*. However, the point that I remember making is not whether there should be a derogation; it was that in the directive——

Mr. Howard: I am coming to that.

Mr. Williams: In that case, I shall leave it at that.

Mr. Howard: I was dealing with the argument put by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and the hon. Member for Greenwich, who said that she was not only speaking for herself but reflecting—an interesting word, I thought—the views of her party. Her party is adept at reflecting the views of the last person who has been speaking to the particular spokesman of the party involved. Perhaps I should not dwell too long on that point.

There are other reasons for our decision not to take advantage of this derogation. Primary agricultural products are particularly prone to environmental defects which are beyond the control of the farmer. More often than not, a farmer's supplies are mixed at market with the supplies of other farmers before undergoing processing. It would be very difficult to identify any particular supplier. I do not claim that agricultural products uniquely have these features, but for them the combination of these features is more common and more important than it is for anything else.

I shall deal with the difference in terminology which was raised by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. We are quite clear that what is intended to be excluded are the sort of things that are done on farms, such as harvesting and threshing, and things which are necessary to produce the product in its marketable form, so the slaughter of animals is included.

The exact words in the directive—"initial processing"—did not seem very apt. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) that we should not simply adopt the language of the Community directive. There is a rather confusing implication in using the words "initial processing". Processing which goes beyond initial processing is not excluded; that result would clearly be absurd. In addition, we believe that the word "initial" may suggest that some processes which we consider to be part and parcel of the production of primary agricultural products are covered by the directive.

We think that the reference to products that have not undergone an industrial process expresses the underlying intentions of the directive, as expressed in its own

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preamble, rather better than the language of the directive itself. That is why we have chosen to change the wording to that extent from that in the directive.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I hope that the Minister will say something about the extent to which agriculture is exempted. I mentioned a number of examples and I should like to know what the position is.

Mr. Howard: There is no intention to exclude agricultural products from the kind of liability which they attract at the moment. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East mentioned a number of hypothetical circumstances and asked where the liability would lie in those circumstances. At the moment, liability is attracted under the law of contract. There would also be liability under the law of tort—if, for instance, it could be demonstrated that a farmer or manufacturer of a spray, or something of that kind, which was used in the course of the growth of the product concerned were negligent. Nothing in the directive or the Bill affects that liability. The only question is whether the additional liability provided by the Bill should be applied to agricultural products. For the reasons that I have given, we do not think that that would be an appropriate course to take.

I was pleased to hear the warm welcome that the general safety requirement received from, I think, every hon. Member who spoke. Perhaps I should remind the House of the important differences between that part of the Bill and part I. Part I imposes a civil liability only and covers most products. Part II will make it a criminal offence to supply unsafe consumer goods and civil liability will attach only in respect of breaches of specific safety regulations, in a similar way to the provisions in the Consumer Safety Act 1978.

A number of points were raised about part II. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West returned to the pleasant disputation that took place in the Standing Committee on the private Member's Bill promoted last year by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) about the time for which Customs officers would be able to detain goods—not, I emphasise, as was incorrectly stated by the right hon. Gentleman, in order to decide whether goods are safe or unsafe—that is not the purpose of detention of goods by customs officers—but so that the officers may form a provisional judgment on whether the attention of trading standards officers should be drawn to those goods. The trading standards officers decide whether goods are safe or unsafe and whether action is to be taken. Customs officers make a preliminary assessment and the Standing Committee was eventually persuaded to agree that 48 hours was a sufficient period within which that assessment should be completed.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West accepted that it would not be possible to attach to second-hand goods the same standards of safety that one attaches to new goods. That poses the problem of how to assess the appropriate standards of safety. That would be a difficult exercise, which would enormously complicate the enforcement of any provision. Another difficulty is that second-hand goods are often bought by the least advantaged members of the community who know that those items will have to be renovated before they can be used safely. I see no reason to deprive people of that opportunity. To do so would be a splendid example of well-meaning legislation worsening the lot of those whom it is designed to help.

That is not to say that no problem can arise over second-hand goods. We recognise the potential and that is why we propose to deal with second-hand goods that are particularly prone to pose risks to the safety of consumers by relying on regulations. I am confident that that balance is the best one to adopt and that it will survive whatever scrutiny the right hon. Member for Swansea, West and his colleagues submit it to in Committee.

The third part of the Bill makes it an offence to give misleading price indications. There has been a wide welcome for my decision to accept the proposals advanced by the Concordat during the passage of the Bill through another place. I shall certainly take to heart some of the observations made about the possibility of simplifying and shortening the code.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) asked how we could repeal the 1972 Act in the Bill but not activate the repeal until a satisfactory replacement regime had been identified. The answer is that each provision in the Bill will need a commencement order before it is brought into effect. I have said that no commencement order for the repeal of the 1972 Act will take effect until a satisfactory regime has been devised and put in place.

Mr. Williams: Will the commencement order be subject to the positive or the negative resolution procedure? Will the House have an opportunity to debate the matter again before the 1972 Act is repealed?

Mr. Howard: We can consider that matter in Committee. I have no doubt that hon. Members on both sides of the House will have views to express.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: I did not seek to imply that my hon. and learned Friend was being devious, and I see now that under clause 50(2) each provision can be brought into effect by order. I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that clarification.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks.

I am grateful to all hon. Members who have contributed to the debate. The discussion has been wide ranging, but no more so than I would have expected on a subject as diverse as the protection of consumers. The Bill is important, both to industry and to the users of its products and services. It is important that we take time to consider its implications for us all, but I hope that those who pay attention to these matters will have been struck, as I was, by the concern expressed by my hon. Friends about the problems that face British industry and the extent to which it can obtain insurance for its products, compete effectively in the market place, and provide employment for our people. That was in contrast to the rather unworldly attitudes adopted by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West, who spoke for the official Opposition, and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes), who spoke for the alliance. In that spirit, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bill).

CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL *[LORDS]* [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Consumer Protection Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise —

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) any expenses incurred or compensation payable by a Minister of the Crown or Government department in consequence of any provision of that Act; and

(ii) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act; and

(b) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund —*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Parliamentary and Other Pensions Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

8.18 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Since 1965, there have been six Acts of Parliament dealing with the parliamentary pensions scheme. On almost every occasion, the Minister responsible has had to apologise for the complexity of the legislation. This Bill is no exception, but I hope that it will allow some of the complexities of the present arrangements to be avoided in the future.

The Bill's main purpose is to enable the parliamentary pensions scheme to be contained in regulations rather than in primary legislation. That has two advantages: it makes the scheme simpler and more readily understandable. The current rules of the scheme will be able to be published in consolidated form, so that it will be easier to consult them, and any future changes to the rules will require not primary legislation but the simpler procedure appropriate to statutory instruments.

Before I describe the contents of the Bill in more detail, I should make a couple of general points. The first is the importance I attach to listening to Members' comments about the scheme and to discussing with Members any changes the Government propose. My commitment to this will, I hope, be clear not just from the Bill's provisions on consultation, but from the steps I have taken already to explain to Members what the Bill itself would do. I am grateful for the views of those Members I have been able to consult during the preparation of this Bill. I believe they generally appreciated the reasons for simplifying the scheme in the way we propose. I should particularly pay tribute to the chairman of the trustees of the pension fund, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), for his help and advice.

The second general point is to emphasise, especially to the House, that this Bill does not amend the provisions of the scheme in any way. I am aware that some aspects of the scheme are seen by some hon. Members as unsatisfactory, but we have a tradition of referring proposals for improvements in our pension arrangements to an independent body. The House will recall that substantial changes were made to the scheme in 1984 following recommendations by the Top Salaries Review Body. In view of this I do not expect the TSRB to offer recommendations on the pension scheme again in the near future.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Surely the Leader of the House is not implying that the House, when it last took the decision as a result of the recommendations of the TSRB, actually enacted the recommendations of the TSRB. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that it did not.

Mr. Biffen: The House has never been in a position of formally, totally and exactly reflecting any recommendations from the TSRB. I believe that the hon. Gentleman will none the less conclude, if he considers the legislation that was put through the House following that report on the pension scheme, that it reflected many of the recommendations, including the extremely valuable one on the rate of accrual. I accept that, of course, the House never has reflected and doubtless never will precisely and

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exactly reflect the recommendations of the TSRB. I will, of course, take note of any points that are raised today about the substance of the scheme, but I believe that our debate should and must concentrate on the contents of the Bill itself.

Clause 1 reproduces the main provisions of the existing legislation governing the existence of the parliamentary contributory pension fund. The fund will continue to operate with the current trustees, appointed by the House, as it does now. Detailed arrangements for the conduct of the trustees' business will, in future, be contained in regulations.

Clause 2 is the heart of the Bill. It gives a power to the Leader of the House to make regulations providing for pensions for Members, Ministers and certain other office-holders. The principal matters that may be covered by the regulations are listed in schedule 1. This clause and schedule are based on various provisions of the Superannuation Act 1972 which governs most of the main public service pensions schemes. Schedule 2 provides for the current legislation to continue to have effect until it is replaced, as appropriate, by regulations made under the new power.

Although the change from primary legislation to regulations means that the opportunities in the House for debate and amendment of the Government proposals will be less extensive, the clause provides significant safeguards for the rights of Members. No regulations can be made that adversely affect the accrued pension rights of former Members or office-holders no longer in service at the time of the making of the regulations, or their dependants, without their consent. The Leader of the House is obliged to consult the trustees and Members' representatives before making any regulations. The regulations themselves will be subject to affirmative resolution procedure in both Houses.

Clause 3 provides for the continuation of the annual Exchequer contribution to the fund, which is based on the recommendation of the Government Actuary. He will continue to report on the fund every three years, but the Bill does slightly amend present practice. In future the Government Actuary will be recommending a rate of contribution by the Exchequer for the years following publication of his report, rather than the years following the valuation date, which may be some time before the report is published. This will avoid unexpected adjustments to the rate of contribution, which can upset the trustees' investment activities.

Clause 4 gives authority for the payment of a pension to the widow of Lord Maybray-King, the distinguished former Speaker who died last year. When Mr. Speaker King retired in 1971 his pension arrangements were set out in a special Act of Parliament, as was the practice then. This provided for a pension to be paid to his then wife, who was named in the Act, in the event of his death. She died, however, and he remarried, but the Act did not provide a pension for his surviving widow. There has been a certain amount of public comment on this provision, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to correct any misleading impression that may have been given. Mr. Speaker King's Retirement Act makes specific provision for his widow's pension to be subject to the limitations applying to the pension of Members' widows. Since the parliamentary pension scheme began in 1965, it has provided that the survivor of a marriage after retirement should be entitled to a pension. But it would clearly have been invidious to have made explicit provision in the 1971 Act for the possibility of Mr. Speaker King being married to anyone other than his then wife at the time of his death. Clause 4 is, therefore, needed to ensure that Lady Maybray-King is in no worse a position than if her husband had remained just a Member of Parliament and had not become Speaker.

The House will see from this brief description that the Bill is almost wholly concerned with the legislative framework of the scheme. As I suggested earlier, I envisage no substantial changes to the scheme itself in the absence of recommendations from the TSRB. Some changes will be necessary before next April, however, so that the scheme complies with the requirements of the Social Security Act 1986.

The most significant change is that membership of the scheme will no longer be compulsory for Members. This means that we, like all other members of occupational pension schemes, will be able to take advantage of the new freedom to choose personal pensions. I shall not detain the House further on this point now. I have already circulated to Members an outline of the pension scheme illustrating their effects, and we shall, of course, have an opportunity to debate the regulations themselves. I am incidentally indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) for pointing out an ambiguity in that outline in the reference to pensions based on final salary: in common with many other schemes, pensions are based on the salary earned in the last 12 months of service, rather than the rate in payment on the date of retirement.

In conclusion, I say to the House that I believe that we should not take up an inordinate amount of parliamentary time with debates on our terms and conditions. It is, however, right that there should be a proper degree of public and parliamentary scrutiny. This short and relatively modest Bill improves the modalities by which we make and discuss these arrangements. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.27 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I believe that the House will want to thank the Leader of the House for that extremely clear and unusually concise presentation of what is, in fact, a rather complex matter. I accept that, as the right hon. Gentleman's speech confirmed and as the explanatory and financial memorandum tells us, the main purpose of the Bill is to enable the parliamentary pension scheme to be set out in regulations rather than, as at the present time, in successive Acts of Parliament.

The Bill makes no changes to the rules of the present scheme, but in future it will enable further developments in the parliamentary pension scheme to be made by regulations rather than by primary legislation. The case for making future changes by regulation rather than by primary legislation is that since pensions for Members of Parliament were first introduced in the Ministerial Salaries and Members' Pension Act 1965 no fewer than five Acts of Parliament have been found necessary during the following 20 years. I accept that the scheme is now very complex and that further amendments to the scheme as it now stands would make it even harder to follow than it is today.

The Bill proposes three things. The first is that the parliamentary contribution fund should continue and that

the elected trustees should continue to decide how to invest the assets of that fund. Secondly, it provides that the present rules of the scheme should be continued. Existing provisions, therefore, both those enacted by previous primary and secondary legislation, which relate to the parliamentary contributory pension fund, are to be continued. They are set out in schedule 2 and the provisions are safeguarded as though they were contained in regulations under clause 2. These features will not be controversial. Indeed, the House will be pleased that the trustees' role is to be safeguarded.

Thirdly, the Leader of the House is empowered to make regulations for future changes to the scheme. The provisions are listed in the 13 paragraphs of schedule 1. Clause 2(4)*(a)* enables the Leader of the House to make regulations covering any or all of those provisions. Clause 2(4)*(b)* gives the Leader of the House the power to make regulations from a date before they are made. If I understand that correctly, it is a retrospective power.

Clause 2(4)*(c)* provides a general power to make different provisions in respect of different recipients. These powers will give greater flexibility to the scheme but they are wide ranging. The powers are to be exercised by statutory instrument and the Bill provides that regulations cannot be made unless the trustees, other representatives and those who are eligible for a pension are consulted by the Leader of the House. That is welcome. Regulations must be approved by a vote in both Houses. The approval is to be sought by affirmative resolution guaranteeing what would normally be a one and a half hour debate.

No one will doubt that the regulation-making power gives very great power indeed to the Leader of the House and to the Government. If the past is any guide, in future many matters of controversy will arise from further proposed changes in the parliamentary pension scheme. The House might wish to make amendments to what the Leader of the House proposes. That will not be possible because a regulation can only be accepted, defeated or withdrawn.

Moreover, the one and a half hour debate will be inadequate for any major proposal for change. The great advantage of proceeding by way of further primary legislation is that it gives ample scope for debate and for considered amendment. The disadvantage is the increasing complexity of primary legislation and the lack of flexibility.

These points, in particular the objections to the regulation-making procedure, have been put strongly to the Leader of the House and I believe that he recognises the widespread concern.

One proposal that has emerged in discussion is that which allows debate on an amendable motion before any regulations altering the scheme are laid before the House. The amendable motion is the procedure by which we decide such complex matters as Members' pay, the amount and content of the secretarial allowance, car allowance and other controversial matters. As a result of those debates on the motions, amended or not, and approved by the House, regulations are subsequently issued. Such a procedure has the great advantage of allowing for detailed amendment and for debate not being limited to one and half hours. Such a procedure would meet the anxieties expressed by many hon. Members. We shall listen with particular interest to what the Minister says later. I hope that it will be possible to explore the matter further in Committee.

The other main change in the Bill is the provision which governs the Exchequer contribution to the parliamentary contributory pension fund as provided for in clause 3. The Government Actuary will continue to value the fund every three years and to produce a report as soon as practicable after the valuation date. Each report will continue to recommend the Exchequer contribution rate and the changes will come into effect in the year following the year in which the report is made, and in the two subsequent years. This differs from present arrangements whereby the Exchequer contribution to the fund is set from the three years starting with the year of the valuation date. It is claimed that the change will lead to a smoother adjustment to whatever new rate is proposed. I am inclined to accept that.

That apart, there is only one other change to the Bill to which the Leader of the House referred. Clause 4 amends Mr. Speaker King's Retirement Act 1971 and provides a pension for the widow of the late Lord Maybray-King. This has attracted some critical attention since it extends the right to a pension to the survivor of Lord Maybray-King's post-retirement marriage. However, the provision is in line with the current arrangements for Speakers' widows' pensions and for the pensions of the widows of other Members of Parliament, which also provide for the payment of pension to the survivor of a post-retirement marriage. I was surprised at that. As such a provision has been part of the parliamentary pension scheme since it was introduced in 1965 it would, indeed, be an anomaly if Lord Maybray-King's widow were to be treated differently from the widows of other Members.

The Leader of the House has made it clear that he does not intend to introduce in the Bill any other changes in the provisions of the parliamentary pensions scheme. I accept that this is not the occasion to make major amendments to the scheme since we shall shortly receive the report of a further review of parliamentary pay and allowances from the TSRB, but there are a number of anomalies which we now have the opportunity to rehearse or to remove.

I was a little worried about what the Leader of the House said about the next TSRB report. He gave the impression that it would not consider pensions. I would not like the Leader of the House or anybody else to think that we reached in the 1984 Act a perfection in pension provision, because clearly that is not so. We have been learning slowly over the years how to construct a reasonable pension arrangement for Members who have, after all, the most curious and most threatened career structure of any group in the country.

On the subject of anomalies, the House will recall that in the 1984 Act it is agreed that if a Member retires at the end of a Parliament, and if at that time he is over 60 and has served for 20 years, he is entitled to a full, unabated pension. There will be a small number of hon. Members, aged 57, 58 or 59, who have completed 20 years of service and who do not wish to serve again for the life of a further Parliament. It is reasonable for such ex-Members to wait until they are 60 before drawing their full, unabated parliamentary pension. But as things stand such a Member has to defer drawing such a pension until he is 65, unless he is prepared to draw a substantially abated pension. Surely that anomaly should be put right.

Further thought should be given to the 60/20 rule. If a Member has reached the age of 60 and has served for 20 years but stands and is defeated in the subsequent general

[Mr. Peter Shore]

election, he is not qualified under the current rules to draw an unabated pension. He is in exactly the same position as a Member over 60 who has completed 20 years' service but who decides not to stand again at the general election. The logic or justice of treating one Member differently from another is not clear.

There is a further anomaly. All hon. Members are entitled to severance pay, or resettlement grant, if they lose their seats at a general election, if they cannot stand as a result of boundary changes, if their constituencies cease to exist or if they retire at a general election. The resettlement grant is graded according to the age of the Member and the period of his service. That applies to all Members except those who have reached the normal age of retirement. For them, no resettlement grant or severance pay is available. Again, that does not seem to me to be fair.

Some hon. Members first enter the House in their middle years. They may well have served for fewer than 20 years before their retirement. Therefore, they will not be eligible for a full parliamentary pension, but no resettlement grant is available to them. Again, that is anomalous when compared to a Member of Parliament who conforms to the 60/20 rule but who chooses to retire at the age of 60. He is entitled to a resettlement grant as well as to his full pension. I believe, therefore, that there is a strong case for making a retirement cash payment equal to the resettlement grant for Members who retire at over 65. It is possible that the Leader of the House or the Minister of State, Treasury will be able to give an assurance on those points. Perhaps hon. Members will wish to frame amendments for the Committee stage.

I conclude with a further point that deserves attention —the contribution that members of the pension scheme and the Treasury make to the fund. The House will recall that in the 1984 Act Members' contributions were increased from 6 per cent. to 9 per cent. of salary. That was 1 per cent. higher than the 1983 review of parliamentary pay and allowances had recommended. Since then, we have had the report of the Government Actuary, which was laid before the House on 26 November 1986, and which valued the fund as it stood on 1 April 1984. It showed a remarkable increase in the value of the fund from £20·6 million in April 1981 to £41·7 million three years later. That has enabled the Government Actuary to recommend that the Treasury contribution be reduced from 16 per cent. in 1984 to 13 per cent. in 1987.

I have no knowledge of the value of the fund to date, but if it has kept pace with market values generally it must be at least twice the £41·7 million value in April 1984. If that is so, there will already be a strong surplus of assets over all computable liabilities in the pension fund now. Under present arrangements, that will simply mean, when the Government Actuary next reports, a further—and large — reduction in the Treasury contribution. The Social Security Act 1986 allows Members to opt out of the parliamentary pension scheme in favour of a personal pension. That must make the parliamentary pension scheme less attractive. On the face of it, the 9 per cent. Members' contribution seems to have been set too high and a new basis for calculating the Treasury contribution or other changes and improvements in the benefits available under the pension fund are now required.

I hope that we shall hear more about that from my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), and, indeed, from other trustees of the fund. I hope that we shall have a sympathetic response from the Treasury Minister.

This is in no sense a party issue. I am speaking for myself and reflecting my own views, not the views of my party, but I hope that in Committee it will be possible to make further progress in improving our parliamentary and other pension arrangements and removing the anomalies that still exist, which are small in cost but burdensome in their effect.

8.44 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for his extremely kind reference to me in his opening speech. As he said, I have a very special interest in this Bill as chairman both of the managing trustees of the parliamentary contributory pension fund and the House of Commons Members' fund.

I pay tribute to the quiet and unpublicised, but often difficult and always painstaking, work of my fellow trustees in the service of their fellow Members. At the same time, I place on record here the unfailing help that we receive from Jim Dobson, Tony Lewis, Frank Brewer and all who work with them in the Fees Office. Nothing is too much trouble for them if they can help any Member of this House, past or present, or their dependants. The House as a whole owes them its gratitude.

The cumulative effect of six separate Acts of Parliament and 20 or so statutory instruments has made the parliamentary pension scheme, as it now exists, administratively very complex; and we have reached the stage where further amendments would make it extremely hard to follow. This Bill makes no changes to the rules of the scheme, or to the benefits available, but will enable the existing legislation to be consolidated in regulations or to continue to have effect as if contained in regulations, as appropriate, and will also enable future amendments to the scheme to be made by regulations. So the Bill, on which I congratulate the Leader of the House, is deserving of support on two counts. First, it will be more convenient and make the scheme more comprehensible to have it in a single document; and, perhaps more importantly, any future amendments will not be subject to the constraints of the parliamentary time available for primary legislation and can thus be implemented more quickly.

Contributions under the original Act in 1965 were expressed as a fixed sum of £150 a year from each Member with, effectively, a matching Exchequer contribution. There was provision for an additional Exchequer contribution to meet the cost of pensions in respect of non-contributory, but reckonable, service before the scheme started. The 1965 Act further provided that benefits and/or contributions could be varied in the light of any surplus or deficiency revealed by an actuarial review of the fund.

By contrast, the Parliamentary and Other Pensions Act 1972 determined the Member's contribution at 5 per cent. of salary, leaving the Exchequer contribution to be determined by the Government Actuary at the appropriate level necessary to balance assets and liabilities. This means, of course—and it is essential for the fact to be understood by the House as a whole—that the fund can never go into surplus, no matter how well the investments perform. Equally, it means that the prospects of securing improvements in the scheme, based on successful investment management, are effectively vetoed since the

Exchequer contribution correspondingly diminishes as a result. I ask the House to take very careful note of that point.

The amendments recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body in its 20th report were estimated to increase the cost of benefits under the scheme from about 18 per cent. to 22 per cent. of a Member's salary. It was therefore recommended that the Member's contribution should be, as before, approximately three eighths, or 8 per cent. Notwithstanding the review body's recommendation, the Government decided that the Member's contribution should be 9 per cent. The effect of that decision, endorsed by the House, has been to cause the Government Actuary to recommend a significant reduction in the Exchequer contribution from 3·3 times Members' contributions in 1985-86 to 2·3 in 1986-87 and only 2·0 thereafter. I must strongly emphasise to the House that this compares most unfavourably with other pension funds. The Government Actuary's Seventh Survey of Occupational Pension Schemes 1983, which was published in 1986, shows that across the board employers' contributions are 3·03 times employees' contributions. The multiple for the public sector alone is 2·6. Allowing for the fact that the parliamentary scheme's multiple also contains an element relating to pensions in respect of pre-1964 service, the Exchequer contribution to our scheme is inferior to that for the public sector taken as a whole.

There have, of course, been many improvements in the scheme over the years, in which the trustees have taken a leading role, not least those in the accrual rate; in the qualifying age/service conditions for early retirement at a general election; and the provision for ill-health retirement pensions. There is, however, a strong case for further improvements, and it is ultimately for the House to decide if and when they should be effected. Take, for example, the relationship between salary and pension. In 1975, the TSRB recommended a parliamentary salary of £8,000, compared with £4,500 per annum then payable. Although the recommendation was not implemented in full (the salary moving only to £5,750) the Government of the day nevertheless permitted a higher notional salary to be implemented for pension purposes. Thus, the widow of a Member who died in service was awarded a pension correspondingly higher than would otherwise have been the case. The House may think that this precedent should be followed in all circumstances where a Government cannot see their way fully to implement TSRB recommendations on pay at the outset, as happened in 1983.

Ill-health retirement is another subject of concern. On retirement for reasons of ill health, service is enhanced to twice its actual length if that is less than 10 years or, if service is more than 10 years, to 20 years or by six and two thirds years, whichever is greater. In no case can the enhancement be greater than the period from the date of retirement to sixty-fifth birthday. The current practice of the Inland Revenue would permit a pension based on potential service to age 65. So if a Member retires on ill-health grounds at the age of 55, with 23 years' service, under the parliamentary pensions scheme his or her pension is based on 28 and two thirds years, whereas under Revenue rules it could be based on 32 years. In the 10 cases we have had to date, seven pensioners would have benefited under a change to the Revenue maximum.

I turn now to the death in service gratuity. The gratuity payable on death in service is a sum equal to a Member's salary. The Revenue limit is four times salary, including any retained benefits. If the gratuity in the parliamentary scheme were to be set at twice the Member's salary at the date of death, the question of retained benefit could be ignored. On current salary, the widow of a Member who died in service would, therefore, receive £37,000, compared with the Revenue limit of double that amount, less any retained benefits as defined by it.

The pension paid to widows and widowers is currently one half of the Member's notional ill-health pension. The Revenue maximum is two thirds of the Member's notional ill-health pension, based on potential service to age 65. So if a Member dies in service at the age of 55, with 22 years' service, the widow or widower would receive over £2,500 a year less than the Revenue maximum allows. Moreover, under our scheme, the widow's or widower's pension ceases on remarriage or cohabitation, whereas, under Revenue practice, it may continue for life notwithstanding remarriage or cohabitation.

Some of the public comment there has been on clause 4 of the Bill, which allows for the payment of a pension to Lord Maybray-King's widow, must have left many of those we represent with the impression that the widows of Members of Parliament are extremely well provided for. While Lady Maybray-King's pension would, in any case, not be payable from the parliamentary pensions scheme, but from the Consolidated Fund, it may thus be instructive to spell out in this debate just how much the generality of widows of Members of Parliament are entitled to receive.

If a Member died, over the age of 65, with 30 years' service, his widow's pension would be £4,604. In the case of a Member who died, under the age of 65, with 14 years' service — and with an enhancement of over six and a half years—the long-term pension of his widow was less than £2,800 a year. That is the reality behind some of the public comment there has been about clause 4 of the Bill, and right hon. and hon. Members may feel that the time has now come to look at improvements in widows' benefits that would bring them more into line with those in some other schemes. In particular, a case could be made for a minimum pension based on not less than 10 years' actual and notional service. At the present time, this would provide a widow's pension of £1,800 a year which very few people here, or anywhere else, could describe as extravagant.

I am, of course, very much aware how strongly many right hon. and hon. Members feel about the payment of a year's salary as resettlement grant to Members who retire under the age of 65, but not to their colleagues, often with much longer service, who have reached that age when they leave the House. Resettlement grant is payable from the Consolidated Fund and not from the parliamentary pensions scheme, but the Leader of the House has been made fully aware of the strength of feeling on this issue which, no doubt, others will want to speak about as the debate proceeds.

If we accept the hints given both by the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister last Thursday about the length of time left to us before this Parliament is dissolved, the Bill now before us may have two Second Readings, one before the election and one afterwards. If that proves to be the case, there will be ample time for suggestions made in this debate to be fully considered before we enact the Bill.

As of now, as chairman of the managing trustees, I am glad to have had the opportunity provided by this debate

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

to indicate both the restraints on the parliamentary pensions scheme and, at the same time, some of the improvements I should like to see, especially for Members' dependants. I hope that they will be given due attention by both sides of the House and that today's hopeful precepts on improving the scheme, or at least some of them, will become tomorrow's practice. It is within the power of the House to make that happen.

8.58 pm

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): I wish to add only a few words to those of the right hon. Members for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). As they have just said, the present scheme is said to be too complex. The Bill will enable us swiftly to alter arrangements and to take them through the House easily without the long debates and delays which have characterised our past legislation. That may well be, and to that extent one welcomes these new arrangements, but it implies that new arrangements are desirable and that changes will be made. In several respects, which have already been alluded to, these changes are certainly necessary.

I should like to deal principally with two items. The first is the gratuity or resettlement grant — I am not sure which to call it — at the end of one's service in Parliament. I should declare an interest in this matter because I am over 65 and shall not receive one. The gratuity or resettlement grant has never been payable to one who will receive a pension. Originally, if an hon. Member retired or disappeared from the House, he did not receive a pension until he was 65, so there was a gap when he received no parliamentary pensionable income. Therefore, it was fair that there should be some payment to tide him over until he was 65 and could receive a pension. However, as a consequence of one or two hard cases which will be present in the minds of right hon. and hon. Members, first, we gave a gratuity to people younger than 65. Then one could receive one's pension at the age of 62, and now one can receive it at the age of 60. One can even receive a reduced pension and a gratuity at the age of 50. If one is over 65, however, one cannot receive a gratuity.

The reason for the arrangement to tide over those who have not reached the age of 65 has now disappeared, so it is reasonable to discuss whether those over 65 should also receive a gratuity or resettlement grant or whether the others should not because they receive a pension. There is no logic or fairness in the present position and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House or anyone in his position will wish to consider that soon.

My second point relates to our contributions, which are now 9 per cent. of salary. I understand that, historically, the reason why we pay 9 per cent. of salary is because we made no or too low contributions before 1964, so we have to make up time. As has been said, the Exchequer reviewed the position and decided that its contribution and ours were unnecessarily high to maintain the fund, so it reduced its contribution from 3·3 times hon. Members' contributions to 2·3 times — a prudent financial move. But why are we left paying 9 per cent.? Should not our contribution decrease proportionately? I do not understand the logic of the present position. Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House say why we still pay 9 per cent., yet the Treasury has reduced its contribution so remarkably?

If we pass the Bill, as we undoubtedly shall, it will be possible for my right hon. Friend to make changes in our various arrangements quickly. Is that not important in view of the political situation? Admittedly, the Bill must pass through all its stages and that will take time, but if we are to have a general election, as we read in the newspapers, perhaps nothing can stop my right hon. Friend, as soon as the Bill receives Royal Assent, introducing regulations to make all sorts of beneficent changes which will gladden the hearts of more than 100 right hon. and hon. Members who will retire before the general election.

If we continue in our Sessions and our Parliament and we go beyond 1 January next year, for many people the position will be transformed. We will then go to a salary of over £21,000, linked to the chief veterinary officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food — which, of course, will enable us to be very important people. But unless we reach 1 January 1988 we will not receive that. At the end of perhaps next week, when we get rid of the Bill, it will be possible for the Treasury to introduce various regulations to improve matters.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe spoke about widows. Is it possible to imagine that the widow of a Member who served over 20 years in this House will get a pension of £2,000 a year less than one can get from the Department of Health and Social Security if one applied over the counter? It is an absolute disgrace that this should be tolerated and even to speak of it ought to give one a sense of shock.

Such changes, which will not cost very much money — the usual plea of a Back Bencher to the Front Bench — nevertheless ought to be made in the short time that may be available to us before Parliament is dissolved.

9.6 pm

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): It is agreed in all parts of the House that an adequate contributory pension scheme in up-to-date form is a most necessary buttress to the independence and reputation of the House and of each hon. Member. It is largely because the Bill offers a way for amendments to be made to the scheme to keep it up to date with less delay than in the past and with much less excuse about lack of parliamentary time that I, who have the honour to be one of the managing trustees, support the Bill.

Pensions are a very dynamic topic. Already in this short debate a formidable list of invaluable changes has been carefully compiled by the Leader of the House, who has always seemed to me to be very understanding of such problems.

In supporting this new method of keeping the scheme up to date and in line with general developments in pension schemes, I would like to support those hon. Members who have already pointed out the extraordinary situation of Exchequer contributions. The trustees, under the diligent leadership of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), try their best to improve the state of the fund and if the long-term consequences were not likely to be so unfortunate, it would be comical if, with with the assistance of a buoyant

stock market, their labours were reasonably successful, and the sole result was that the Exchequer's contribution was automatically reduced.

This also destroys the opportunity that trustees ought to have of being able to say to the Leader of the House, if there is an imminent surplus because of the success of the fund, that they have been reasonably good stewards, that they have been lucky in their results, that they have more backing to enable the fund to be improved, and that Members should have better benefits in return for their substantial 9 per cent. contributions. But not a bit of it. We are not in that position at all, because there cannot be a surplus. Any improvements in the scheme are bound to decrease, in however small a degree, the Exchequer contribution.

The trustees are set an impossible task and are given no incentive, apart from a sense of duty to the Exchequer, to keep the fund buoyant. I am sure that the absurdity of the long-term position must be apparent to the Leader of the House and the Treasury Ministers and that we shall have some encouragement to hope that the position will be made a little more equitable on that score.

I should like to add my voice to those who have already said that if we are to proceed by regulation, for which there is much to be said, all hon. Members must be given an opportunity for a debate on an amendable motion. I am sure that my fellow trustees, and particularly our chairman, will not object to my pointing out that, although trustees try, as a result of their experience month by month in managing the fund and the scheme, to point out anomalies and remind the House, particularly the Leader of the House, of injustices inherent in the present scheme, the job of the trustees legally is to administer the scheme as the House has already enacted it. Anything we do over and above that is simply a bonus from such experience as may have been accumulated. Therefore, the House should not rely—I am sure it would not—upon a small body of trustees to maintain and uphold the interests of different hon. Members, almost all of whom have somewhat different circumstances.

I hope that as the Bill proceeds on its way—I wish it a speedy passage—the Leader of the House will come forward with firm and clear undertakings that the Government fully recognise an obligation to enable the House to have a full debate on an amendable motion before any regulations under the Bill are introduced.

9.12 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I will not detain the House for long, but I join others in giving my thanks to those trustees who have worked so hard over the years to look after our interests. I do not think that their work is suitably appreciated or lauded in the House. I am grateful and I am sure that every hon. Member present is grateful also.

I should like to thank all the officers of the Fees Office —it would be invidious to name any particular one—for the help they give Members in administering an extremely complicated scheme, vested as it is in so many different pieces of legislation. That is why I welcome the intention behind the Bill.

There are some details with which I take issue and which I hope to have an opportunity to explore in Committee. I share the concern of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) that pension debates might in future be limited to a one-and-a-half hour order some time after 1 o'clock in the morning because such debates are important.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has set out so clearly, there are anomalies. Our widows are not as well treated as widows in other schemes. Our people who retire after 65 are not as well treated, and our people who die in service or who are severely injured in service are not as well treated. I wish them to be treated to the extent allowable within the general Inland Revenue and DHSS regulations. That is certainly possible given the strength of the scheme as it exists.

There are some problems within the legislation. For instance, clause 2 states:

> "The Leader of the House of Commons may, with the consent of the Treasury, by regulations make provision with respect to the Fund".

We had a civil war about that once upon a time. We vote funds to the Treasury; it does not vote funds to us. Our trustees look after the scheme, not the Treasury. The Treasury has no responsibility for it. Therefore, the clause should refer to the trustees and not the Treasury. I am certain that that is not an oversight and I am equally certain that the Leader of the House did not exercise his mind sufficiently on the constitutional implications of the clause. It is important not only constitutionally but practically. If the trustees have no incentive to manage the scheme well, why should they bother? It seems that there is a major fault in the scheme.

Clause 3(2) talks about the contributions being made in accordance with the report of the Government Actuary. That seems as if we are legislating in the sense that each time one has a row with one's wife, the mother-in-law must be the judge and jury. That seems to be the effect of that provision, and it should be looked at.

The point was well made that the freedom to choose outside pensions which now exists will cause some problems for the scheme in the future. It will certainly cause me some heart-searching. I do not mind coming in at 38 years of age and bringing 20 years' reckonable service with me. I do not mind at all if that extra money—from which I can never benefit because even on my own contributions, by the time I reach 60 I shall be over the Inland Revenue limit — results in better benefits for widows of those who die in service or those who are injured in service. But I mind a great deal when the Government Actuary says, "I shall nick that and give it back to the Treasury." That, in effect, is what is proposed. I could have given that money to charity rather than to the Treasury, but that is what has been enacted.

As increasing numbers of people such as myself come into the House with a good pension scheme behind them which brings in substantial benefits, it seems to me that we should have some say in those benefits. I do not want to pay any less than anyone else, but it ought to go to a good cause, and these days it does not seem to me that the Treasury is the best cause in the world.

That brings me to the 9 per cent. actuarial contribution. I well remember those debates, because I led from the Opposition Front Bench. I remind hon. Members that the additional 1 per cent. contribution was not recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body but was part of the rakeback which the chairman of the 1922 Committee proposed — I suspect not with the permission of his Committee — in order to save the Government's face

[Mr. John McWilliam]

when they decided not to implement the Top Salary Review Body's report and to stage the salary increase over a number of years instead of granting it immediately as was suggested. They decided to rake back another 1 per cent. by inserting an additional pension contribution, and tonight it is proposed that the Treasury should rake it back. I do not mind having a clean argument about salaries and pensions, but that muddied the water, and I feel strongly about that 1 per cent. contribution, as clearly, from what I have said, I am paying far too much already.

I welcome the opportunity to get the Bill into Committee. I think that we can do something with it. The way in which we treat our widows and the way in which we treat those who die in service—particularly given the number who have died in the last six months—as well as those who are injured in the service of the House because of the way in which we choose to operate does not make the House a particularly civilised place for which to work.

I do not mind working such long hours, but if I keeled over tomorrow I would like to think that my family would at least be well taken care of. At present that is not the case. I therefore look forward to taking the Bill into Committee and I look forward to the opportunity sensibly to amend it once it is there.

9.20 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I shall detain the House for only a short while. Although this appears to be a constitutional Bill at first sight, it is not merely such a Bill. I want to voice my suspicion about anything that is unamendable. I hope that the Leader of the House will consider how amendments can be made because a "take it or leave it" option puts the House in a most invidious position.

The Bill allows us the opportunity to be rid of anomalies. No one here is after a gold-plated scheme. However, with the help of the funds in the scheme and the contribution of 9 per cent.—a very high figure indeed—that we make historically as contributors to the pension scheme, we deserve a reasonably good scheme. However, we certainly deserve a scheme which is rid of anomalies before the Bill is enacted.

I want to concentrate on the 60/20 rule. It is the greatest nonsense that if someone chooses to retire at or after his 60th birthday—which may fortunately be the day after a general election — having qualified after serving 20 years, he can draw his unabated pension in full. However, if he is faced with the choice of retiring at 58 or 59 and decides that another Parliament is not for him, he will either suffer an abatement of pension or, if he wants to wait for it in full, he will have to wait a number of years which may be beyond his financial means. Nor do I see why a person defeated in that age band should suffer any difference of treatment. Frankly, I believe that neither person is likely to get employment again.

I want the Leader of the House to look at this matter sympathetically. The Leader of the House was described as seeming to be sympathetic. I thought that he had a flinty tone about him tonight. I hope that that is simply role playing and the Leader of the House was merely playing "Biffen the hard man" rather than the real Leader of the House. If the pension is not drawn until 60, there is no additional charge to the fund and there is no difference between someone retiring at 58 or 59 or after the age of 60. Such a small worthwhile benefit is relatively free of cost and would improve the scheme, ridding it of one anomaly —widows are another anomaly—and that would make the scheme beneficial to the contributors. After all, if we are expecting people to pay 9 per cent. of their salary towards a contributory pension scheme, at the very least they should look forward to retiring in comfort comparable to those in outside industry without having to suffer a cut in pension as a penalty.

9.22 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): It is a pleasure to reply to this useful debate. After my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House moved the Second Reading, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) asked a series of questions and made a series of observations about the Bill, to which I will do my best to reply.

My great-uncle was the hon. Member in the Liberal interest for Tower Hamlets, Bow and Bromley. I believe that this is the first time that I have followed the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney in a debate of this kind, although I have followed his colleague in Tower Hamlets, the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). It is a delight to pay an incidental tribute to my great-uncle as well as to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney spelt out concisely and neatly the antithesis before us, in terms of the complexity of the legislation and the disadvantages of the simplicity inherent in regulations. He was joined in those observations later by his hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam). I listened very carefully to the right hon. Gentleman's comments about the procedure upon which we would embark under the Bill and in particular to his questions about the way in which we might handle these matters, assuming that the Bill is enacted. I want to put a proposition before the House which I hope will act as a vehicle for our debates in Committee.

The Bill also provides for consultation before regulations are introduced, but we shall consider carefully whether we can devise arrangements more like those for determining the pay of Members of Parliament, in which Members have an opportunity to debate an amendable motion before final proposals are introduced. That was the gist of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, and I am delighted to respond in this way. He and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) mentioned Lady Maybray-King and drew attention to the fact that some of the criticisms that have been made outside the House about that provision were ill-founded. I am grateful to both right hon. Gentlemen for sustaining the proposition in the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney mentioned the Top Salaries Review Body and changes that might be made to the provisions of the scheme and the arrangements for Members, but, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said, the Government do not believe that it is an appropriate time to amend the scheme. We have heard suggestions for improving it, all of which can be referred to the TSRB when it next considers Members' pensions. I should say that substantial improvements tend to carry substantial costs.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney mentioned anomalies relating especially to Members retiring at or about the age of 60. He mentioned the pension for a Member who retires, with 20 years' service, between the ages of 57 and 59 and suggested that that should be paid as though he had reached the age of 60. In 1984, substantial improvements were made in the pensions for that group. Their pensions were abated by a smaller percentage than the full actuarial reduction. Hon. Members also addressed the issue of lowering the general retirement age to 60. It was considered by the TSRB, most recently in its report on pensions in 1983, but it did not recommend a general reduction.

Mr. John: My right hon. Friend's point was not that the full pension should be paid at the age of 57, 58 or 59, but that if the Member retiring at that age chose not to draw his pension until he was 60 he was taking advantage of the 60-20 rule.

Mr. Brooke: There is a hazard in our getting too deeply drawn into the details of the scheme, given the fact that it is not the purpose of the Bill to change the rules at this juncture.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney asked another question about which I can give some information to the House. He said that Members of Parliament aged between 60 and 65 with at least 20 years' service who retired received pensions while those who lost an election did not. That was changed in 1984, and I am delighted to say that, after the age of 60, it makes no difference whether a Member was defeated in an election or retired.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw) and others mentioned the resettlement grants for those aged over 65. As they recognised, resettlement grants are not part of the pensions scheme and the arrangements for determining their size and the qualifications for receiving them are not affected by the Bill. They are fixed by resolution of the House following recommendations from the TSRB, and we have no plans to change the rules in the near future. I heard what was said in the debate, but those who are aged over 65 receive a lump sum and a pension from the pensions scheme. No doubt that influenced the decision that there would be no resettlement grants as well.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): Does my hon. Friend know the amount of the pension that they get?

Sir Anthony Kershaw: And the amount of the lump sum?

Mr. Brooke: The amount will depend on the individual hon. Member's circumstances.

Mr. McWilliam: It might help the hon. Members for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) and for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw) if I tell them that an hon. Member may commute up to one third of his pension as a lump sum when he retires. However, the lump sum is not there as a matter of right and is not built into the scheme.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: What is all this about a lump sum for people over the age of 65? I have not heard of this before. If my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) wants to know the kind of pension that one gets after 32 years of service, I can tell him. It is about £9,000 a year.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should not have taken his speech out of order in replying to the debate. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney raised the matter of contributions and the amounts.

I shall respond in general to the question about the report by the Government Actuary. The Government Actuary's latest report was published in November and shows that the Exchequer is still making additional contributions to eliminate the deficiency in the fund that was created mainly by earlier Acts which gave credit for service before 1964, for which no contributions were paid. Therefore, there is no question of the fund being in surplus. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe spoke about that.

I realise that it is important for the House to have clear information about the state of the fund and the Government Actuary's report. If there are ways in which we can improve the transmission of that information, I shall be delighted to enter into correspondence with hon. Members about how this might be achieved.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe asked a number of questions about methods by which the scheme might be improved. As I said earlier, that is not the substance and subject of the Bill. However, one has to ask that question in the context of various questions to the TSRB. He said that we should be able to secure better benefits if the fund's investments are working as well as we have cause to believe them to be. Of course, that works both ways, and I take it that hon. Members would not wish to see benefits reduced when investments do less well. Under the present system, the Exchequer bears all that risk and that underlies the nature of the Exchequer's contribution.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe conjectured about the date of the election. I cannot shed any light on that, nor can I speculate about the pace with which we can carry this legislation through. The legislation is useful and I hope that it will be carried through promptly. I also have a family association with my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud in that he and my father were LCC members for my constituency. I am conscious that my hon. Friend will not fight the next election. One's fear, when one hears hon. Friends and Opposition Members speak in the Chamber, is that one may be hearing them for the last time. I am delighted that I have had an opportunity to speak in this debate.

The issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud fall into the general area of those raised by other hon. Members, in that improvements to the arrangements for the scheme are not essentially dealt with in this Bill.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainright), as a managing trustee, referred to contributions and the hon. Member for Blaydon and others thanked the trustees and the Fees Office, as do I. The hon. Member for Blaydon introduced the civil war into the debate. Part of my constituency played a role vis-a-vis the rest of the nation with which it is not always associated in the light of subsequent events. I was somewhat puzzled as to whether the Government Actuary or the Treasury was supposed to be the mother-in-law.

Mr. McWilliam: They are interchangeable.

Mr. Brooke: One cannot characterise the Treasury as some kind of impersonal force when Lords Commissioners

[Mr. Brooke]

of the Treasury sit in the House and are personally responsible. The hon. Member for Blaydon also referred to the 9 per cent. contribution, as he did when my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal spoke earlier.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) spoke of particular elements and conditions and although some of the matters raised have been outside the ambit of the Bill as presently constituted it is helpful to have those observations on record so that the debate becomes a quarry from which we can subsequently obtain data.

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): Perhaps the Minister will explain in what way the Bill has been helpful. We had a very depressing speech from the Leader of the House and that of the Treasury Minister has been even more depressing. They have made it clear that they are not prepared to take on board suggestions and proposals put forward from both sides of the House. One appreciates the Minister's argument that certain issues are not matters for him or for the present Bill, but matters for the Top Salaries Review Body or matters for consideration at another time and perhaps with another Bill. Will he come clean and admit that nothing will be done in Committee to change the purpose of the Bill which, as the Leader of the House has said, is merely to bring about a change in the mechanics?

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has made it perfectly clear, as does the Bill, that we are changing the mechanics, but in view of the complexity into which we have got ourselves it would be a mistake to continue to engage in primary legislation to tidy up that complexity.

The hon. Member for Blaydon queried Members' rights in relation to lump sums: I acknowledge that the lump sum figure is secured by commutation, but there is a right that such commutation can take place.

I wish to deal with one matter that has not been raised in the House. There have been occasions in the past when there has been an interaction between tax legislation and Members' allowances and benefits, but it has not always been identified and when it has been noticed thereafter there has been distress that it was not recognised earlier. I wish, therefore, to draw attention to a proposal in the Budget to limit the maximum lump sum that can be paid out on retirement to those joining schemes after 17 March this year. The proposal will affect Members of Parliament in exactly the same way as other employees. It is not relevant to the Bill before us and there will be ample opportunity to debate it when the House considers schedule 5 of the Finance Bill and when it subsequently considers regulations bringing the parliamentary scheme into line with the provisions of the Finance Bill. I repeat that it does not apply to anybody who is a Member now. It relates only to those who come in after 17 March. However, I thought it appropriate and sensible that this should be put on the record so that it will be known to everybody when we deal with the Committee stage of both of the Bills.

It has become clear during the debate that the central purpose of the Bill is to improve the mechanics of the arrangements. I am delighted that we are able to provide a pension for Lady Maybray-King, and for the support that I received from the Opposition Benches for bringing this in. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

PARLIAMENTARY AND OTHER PENSIONS BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Parliamentary and other Pensions Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums required by or under that Act to be paid out of money so provided into the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund;

(b) the payment out of the Consolidation Fund of—

(i) such amounts as are required under that Act to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund in respect of transfer values paid into the Consolidated Fund;

(ii) interest required under that Act to be paid on those amounts; and

(iii) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums required to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund under Mr. Speaker King's Retirement Act 1971 or section 27 of the Parliamentary and other Pensions Act 1972; and

(c) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.

—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Coal Industry

9.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move,

That the draft Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 6th April, be approved.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the order has not been dealt with in the normal manner because it has not been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. Is it right and proper that we should consider the order before it has gone through the normal procedure?

Mr. Speaker: It is in order to debate it.

Mr. Hunt: I understand that the order is due for consideration by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments tomorrow. The order was laid on 6 April and could not be considered by the Committee at its sitting on 7 April, and there has been no sitting since. The order has an operative date of 1 May. I am happy to give the assurance that should the Committee bring any aspect of this order to the attention of the House when it considers it tomorrow, the usual channels will consider the matter further.

Section 3 of the Coal Industry Act 1987, which received Royal Assent on 5 March, empowers the Secretary of State to make grants to the British Coal Corporation towards eligible expenditure relating to costs falling in certain financial years of the corporation. In any years in which grant is to be paid, the Act requires an order, approved by the House, specifying the kinds of expenditure for which grant is to be paid and the limits on that grant. Such orders specify only kinds of expenditure which fall within one or more of the descriptions in schedule 2 to the Act. The Act has thus introduced a flexible regime, enabling support to be given towards the corporation's restructuring costs, with the rate and coverage of support being specified under annual orders in the light of circumstances at the time.

The Government announced to Parliament on 11 March objectives for British Coal which had been agreed with the chairman, Sir Robert Haslam. These have already been published in the *Official Report*. The Government believe that these objectives represent demanding but attainable aims, and that working within this agreed framework will provide long-term security and prosperity to British Coal and the greatest benefit to the nation.

The first draft order under section 3 is consistent with the objectives. It provides for 75 per cent. grant support towards a broad range of costs associated with restructuring to be incurred by British Coal in 1987-88, including costs of redundancy and early retirement, changes of work and place of employment, retraining for those who are to leave or have left the corporation through redundancy or incapacity and costs associated with the promotion of new employment opportunities. It also provides for generous grant towards the maintenance of existing arrangements for the provision of concessionary coal to former employees, who have reached retirement age, or their widows.

The order begins the process of transferring to British Coal full responsibility for terms and conditions which, for most industries and employers, are matters for the employer and borne by him, consistent with the transition to commercial viability in the industry, whilst enabling the Government to continue to meet the larger part of those costs during the process of that transition.

I should emphasise that the order does not seek to transfer to British Coal the burden of continuing costs associated with past restructuring. Continuing benefits to those who took redundancy before 28 March 1987 under the redundant mineworkers' payment scheme will, as in the past, be funded directly by the Government. Similarly, British Coal will continue to be eligible, under section 4 of the Coal Industry Act 1967, section 7 of the Coal Industry Act 1977 and section 4 of the Coal Industry Act 1987, for grants towards the costs of premature and enhanced pensions, transfer payments and other benefits in relation to men already qualifying.

Nor does the order seek to transfer to British Coal more of the costs which are associated with restructuring in the current financial year than it could reasonably hope to meet. The Government remain fully committed to providing the finance necessary to support British Coal's transition to viability. The 75 per cent. grant support proposed for 1987-88 is generous. The increased costs to British Coal arising from the establishment of its own redundancy arrangements is balanced by the extended availability of grant in other areas which were not previously eligible for non-deficit grant or where the level of that grant was previously limited to 50 per cent.

Over the past two years British Coal has made massive progress towards the fundamental restructuring of the industry, concentrating its activities on more highly capitalised and efficient coal faces, enabling the same amount of coal to be produced with fewer faces, fewer men and lower costs. The success of this policy has been dramatically demonstrated by the outstanding growth in productivity, with the weekly productivity record being broken no fewer than 15 times during the course of the 1986-87 financial year. Prospects for the industry and all those who work in it are being transformed. The draft order before us will play a part in that continuing transformation and will, I hope, be welcomed by all hon. Members who have the interests of the coal industry at heart.

9.47 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): In introducing the order, the Minister tried to explain why it has been introduced. I know by speaking to them that some of his hon. Friends were a little puzzled that we should be debating the order, because it is not long since the House debated the Coal Industry Act 1987.

The Minister has explained that we are debating an order which relates to the restructuring of grants. He has explained again that he is satisfied about the financial structure and the targets that have been laid down for British Coal. He is well satisfied, even in terms of the Coal Industry Act 1987, that they are generous. We expressed doubts about that at the time, and I still have doubts.

The schedule to the order has six important headings on various types of expenditure. Head 1 is "Redundancy and early retirement". Head 2 is

"Changes of work and place of employment".

Head 4 is "Concessionary Coal", to which the Minister referred. I am suprised that in his opening remarks he did not deal with heads 5 and 6, which relate to retraining and

[Mr. Alexander Eadie]

new employment. Those are in the schedule. I am not trying to chastise the Minister; the Opposition regard the order as important.

The four sections on redundancy and early retirement are important to the men who will be affected. I do not think that the Minister will dispute that fact. He made it easier for me to make some of my comments, because he referred to the state of the industry. The hon. Gentleman must tell us what contraction of manpower is expected in the near future. It is generally recognised that there has been a massive contraction since 1984 and I have been informed that the average age of men in the industry is about 34. Mining must have virtually the youngest labour force in the country.

There have been substantial productivity increases, and they must be welcomed, but the Minister must concede that the 15 new productivity records set in the past year surely mean that we are producing by far the cheapest coal in Europe. As some miners have been performing so well, will the labour force be free from further contraction or does the Minister expect further calls on expenditure on redundancy and early retirement?

The Minister took care to say that we were not talking about the future, but miners and the people of this country want to know about the future. I have often said on behalf of the Opposition that the industry belongs to the people; it is a source of national wealth.

We have tried to get the Government to ensure the welfare and health of the miners and their industry. I have tried, particularly during energy Question Time, to press the Government about imported coal. They are giving the nod to about 9 million tonnes of imported coal and they cannot claim that that is in the spirit of the free market or competition, because most of that coal is being dumped here at below production cost.

At my annual meeting with my local farmers — the three-hour meeting turned out to be something of a seminar — they complained about cheap food being dumped in this country at below production cost. They said that that was unfair and that it was harming their industry. They were saying the same things about their industry that we say about the coal industry. As some of those farmers are liable to be Conservative supporters, I asked them whether they wanted to address their complaints to the Government. But that is by the way.

We must ensure that manpower in the coal industry does not contract further as a result of the distorted overseas market. I was told today that due to the pound going up in value from about $1·52 to its present level, another cost of £3 per tonne will be put on the coal industry. We could considerably extend this debate if we considered what happened in 1981 and the effect that the pound had in destroying a large slice of British industry. The Minister rightly paid tribute to the productivity record of the miners but a statement on the effects of the pound and overseas markets would be welcomed by both sides of the House.

With regard to redundancy and early retirement, I wish to discuss licensed mines. That question was discussed in my constituency at the weekend. I should explain that, as a result of a takeover bid, about 110 miners in licensed mines face redundancy. It has been suggested to the miners that they will not be covered by the National Coal Board's or British Coal's redundancy terms because the mines are not wholly owned subsidiaries. However, these mines are licensed by the NCB or British Coal. Indeed, there are written terms — a contract — under the coal industry conciliation scheme regarding such mines.

I find this matter a bit perturbing, to say the least. Is it not a fact that a royalty is paid to the NCB or British Coal for the production of coal from private mines? Indeed, we heard lobbies from the Conservative Benches on behalf of private mine owners. I wonder what some of those hon. Members have to say about the problem in my constituency. We are discussing the prospects for miners who have perhaps a few years or many years service. I must tell my hon. Friends that, although I am dealing with this matter on a constituency basis, I believe that it is something that may confront them.

In the various coal debates, we have heard a great deal about the virtues of private ownership and privatisation. The example that I have given is small scale, but it means a hell of a lot for the 110 miners and those other people who may be involved in similar closures in other parts of the country. Is it a good advert for privatisation? Is it a good advert for private mine owners when the miners employed in such mines find themselves in this position? It is appropriate to this order that the Minister should investigate this matter. Indeed, the Minister has a duty and responsibility to do so.

We hear a lot about human rights nowadays, and I am talking about fine decent people. Such people have rights and the Minister has a responsibility not only to investigate this matter, but to try to resolve the problem. I do not expect to be given all the answers tonight, but I am raising the matter now because I do not believe it is something of local significance, but I believe that it could easily affect all the coal-producing areas of the United Kingdom.

I intend to restrict my remarks, although it is tempting to make a longer contribution. The order is important, not trivial. Heads 5 and 6 of the schedule deal with retraining and new employment. The order deals with the allocation of financial resources, so it is appropriate that, however short the debate, the Minister provides the House with an update on what is happening and what is likely to happen.

Like other hon. Members, I receive press releases from British Coal Enterprise Ltd. I bear in mind what the chairman of British Coal said to our Select Committee.

The Opposition do not intend to oppose the order, because of its nature and purpose and because of the way in which it allocates finance. We attach importance to the order because it affects the financial prospects of many people who were employed in the industry and many people who will not be employed in the industry in the years to come.

10.1 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) spoke about the treatment of private sector miners. I wonder about the difference between the public and private sectors in relation to the expenditure listed in the schedule to the order. It seems that miners in the public sector are treated more generously than those who work in the opencast or small private mines. However, I come to a different conclusion. The hon. Member for Midlothian spoke of the rights of those who work in the private and small mines sector. They have rights, but surely the most important right is the right to work in an industry that flourishes and expands.

If we were able to remove the restriction on that sector —in particular the restriction on the number of men employed in each mine— perhaps some of the private companies that unfortunately have to make men redundant would expand and make more provision for the better treatment of employees.

I have received correspondence from private small mine owners in the north-east saying that they would be willing and able to expand employment if that restriction were lifted.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman misses my point. I was talking about the victims of a takeover bid. The private mines are licensed by British Coal. Under the conciliation agreements, the private mines have responsibilities. Private mine owners enter a contract. They should honour it and look after their men.

Mr. Fallon: I accept that. I was trying to say that it would be easier for the private mining sector to honour contracts and to expand if it were not limited to employing 30 men and not governed by bureaucratic and restrictive licensing systems which inhibit development.

I have only one question to ask my hon. Friend the Minister about the order. I perfectly understand why the costs involved in past restructuring of the industry should not now be laid at the door of British Coal. Presumably, for the present restructuring costs, the expenditure listed in the schedule is the expenditure that we would normally expect a commercially viable and profitable industry to sustain from its own resources, out of its own profits, rather than rely on taxpayer grant to subsume. If that is so, what is the aim of the percentage figure in paragraph 4(b)? Is it the aim gradually to reduce that percentage figure to zero as the Coal Board heads for break-even and eventual profitability.

10.6 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I should like to make several points about the order. Perhaps it is strange for me to speak in a coal industry debate, but there is coal-mining in the southern part of my constituency. I am proud to say that my grandfather went down a pit at the age of 14, so I am not entirely ignorant of the industry.

The order is a commentary on the present state of the coal industry. There has been a massive decline in the number of people employed in it. In south Wales alone, the number of people employed underground has declined from 31,000 in 1970 to 12,000 in 1986. There has been a massive decline of 6,500 in the past 18 months alone.

I remember visiting the town of Maesteg—where my relatives lived—frequently in the 1950s and 1960s. Ten thousand miners worked in that community. The order is a sad commentary on the decline of the industry. The coalfied communities have been badly hit. The order gives some means of redress after the enormous job losses in those communities.

Reference has been made to the expenditure headings. We in the alliance are interested in the changes in the type of work that we hope will take place in the coalfield communities. The provision on concessionary coal is helpful, because many families in the coalfields have suffered greatly as a result of mineworkers sustaining injuries. No doubt widows and others who live in those communities will benefit from that part of the order. Head 5, on retraining, is a move in the right direction. The problem is that there have been cuts in retraining, certainly in the part of the south Wales coalfield with which I am familiar. Retraining is extremely important when people are leaving the industry and looking for new employment.

New employment will be and is at present being stimulated by British Coal Enterprise Ltd., an initiative that we support, but we must ask whether the £27 million identified in the order is adequate to solve some of the problems in the coalfield communities now. There is massive unemployment in some of those communities— 25 per cent. in some areas. There is 20 per cent. unemployment in Ystradgynlais, the coalmining part of my constituency. There is a feeling that there has not been enough redress in terms of job creation in those communities.

Mr. David Hunt: It may assist the hon. Gentleman if I point out that the £27,700,000 limit is merely to cover the expenditure specified under head 4—concessionary coal —and does not relate to heads 5 and 6.

Mr. Livsey: I stand corrected. However, if I may now make a point that I would have made later, I should like to ask the Minister how the allocation of funds is broken down between the six heads of expenditure contained in the order. Will he give us some information on that? I stand corrected on item 4 and the figure of £27 million, but what expenditure will take place under the other headings?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Less.

Mr. Livsey: Expenditure for redundancy, retraining and new employment is important. However, for the coalfield communities, linked to that is the general investment policy of British Coal. There is too much of a dichotomy of interests in the energy policy of this country. Decisions have been made about the size of the British coal industry and the manipulation of different sources of energy, such as oil and nuclear power, and the mix between our different sources of energy.

There is no doubt that the British coal industry has to some extent been run down. However, I welcome especially the proposed investment in the Margam mine in south Wales, which is a small start to try to invest more in deep mining. Certainly, we welcome the attitude of the National Union of Mineworkers in south Wales in accepting those proposals for six-day working. I know that that is controversial, but it will certainly result in greater productivity. I hope that that will be the forerunner of more investment in deep mining in the south Wales coalfields.

Will the Minister also advise us how the order will affect the open-cast sector, which appears to be expanding? The Energy Select Committee reported that it wished to see expansion of open-cast mining from 15 million tonnes to 18 million tonnes per annum. However, that is not necessarily in the best interests of those areas where deep mines have been closed. Indeed, one could say that that is a policy for unemployment, because open-cast mining employs fewer people and is causing a great deal of damage to the environment and to the communities——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) rose——

Mr. Livsey: I shall give way in a moment.

It is also inhibiting investment in those communities in other enterprises and industries that would otherwise cater those areas. Open-cast mining creates a bad environment

[Mr. Livsey]

for the encouragement of the new industries which, perhaps, British Coal Enterprise Ltd. is trying to encourage.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that open-cast coal is important for some mines because of its high chlorine content? If coal from open-cast mines was not mixed with the deep-mined coal, many underground mine workers would be put out of a job because they would not be able to sell that coal to the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Livsey: We must achieve a balance between open-cast and deep mining. The amount of open-cast mining that is proposed at present is too great, to the detriment of deep mining and of the jobs in those coalfields. There is clearly a need for open-cast mining but not at the level of 18 million tonnes that is proposed by the Energy Select Committee.

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon): I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's desire to strike a balance in a debate such as this, but is he not coming near to saying that because open-cast mining employs fewer people, so is endemically more efficient, it should be discouraged on economic grounds?

Mr. Livsey: I have not said that we should abolish open-cast mining overnight or anything of the sort; the open-cast sector is too large and has a detrimental effect on coalfield communities by inhibiting new industries, particularly high-tech industries which require a clean atmosphere, because of the amount of dust that it raises.

On the whole, the order provides funds for the industry, so it is welcome, but I doubt whether sufficient resources are being allocated to solve the problems of the coalfield communities. We welcome certain aspects of the order, but the resources may be inadequate to service it.

10.15 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The order comes before the House at an opportune moment, because if the newspapers are to be believed, this may well be our last debate on the coal industry in this Parliament.

The debate provides us with a good opportunity to look back and compare the policies of the Government and the Opposition towards this vital industry. The Opposition made a concerted attempt to do the most grievous damage to it through their silence during the strike and their carping criticism of every piece of legislation that we have introduced to help the industry. It is a stain on their record and it will long be remembered by those who depend on the industry.

I invite the House to compare that with our policies, which have achieved record investment, leading to record productivity time and again. Month after month we read of new records of productivity being achieved. That has been linked with massive redundancy benefits for those who have lost their jobs as a consequence of restructuring which have helped them rebuild their lives and bring new life into the coalfields, and with the creation of British Coal Enterprise Ltd.—one of the most successful job creation endeavours.

Every time we raise the subject of BCEL in the House there is carping criticism from the Opposition. Either it is doing too little or it is not serious. Yet only last week BCEL announced that it had met its job creation target for 1986-87 of 10,000 new jobs. If that company continues to develop 10,000 jobs from nothing in three years, it is clear how quickly it will bring new life into our coalfields. What great progress it has already made to that objective.

One aspect of BCEL accounts for its success more than any other. Obviously, the Government's commitment to provide it with the money that it needs is most important. It knows that it can underpin any good project which is brought forward in the sure knowledge that Government money will be provided to help with its development. The figures show clearly that the most extraordinary additionality is achieved. For every £1 that BCE invests in a project, nearly £7 of other money is also invested. That is a particularly successful and important criterion in job creation.

But the one aspect that accounts for the success of BCEL above all is the hands-on help it gives to people setting up their business for the first time. Ministers need help to set up new business endeavours, because they have not done it before. Wherever there are hands-on help agencies, the job creation success rate has been better, as has the business survival rate. BCEL is developing an enviable record for helping and nurturing new businesses into creation, prosperity and long-term survival.

I ask my hon. Friend to consider whether this hands-on help might not be extended. Many Conservative Members have assisted in the past few months in the creation of urban development corporations in areas of dereliction where industry has declined and where a major effort is needed to pull together all the strands of policy from central Government to local government and tying them in with the private sector. Many of the coalfield communities, particularly in Yorkshire, are well adapted to a similar technique being applied.

When we are returned in the new Parliament with a renewed, perhaps an increased, mandate, I ask that we turn our attention to developing the work of BCEL by adopting and perhaps adapting the techniques of the urban developments corporations. Those who live and work in the coalfield communities have no doubt about one thing above all—that this Government are their future. This Government have given them the money, organisation and determination to give British Coal a successful future. When they contrast this with the mindless militancy of the Opposition, they all know where their future lies.

10.20 pm

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): Listening to the previous speech, I could not help thinking that the election had started. I do not think the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) will mind me saying that I thought he jumped the gun with great style. He has probably rehearsed that spontaneous speech a dozen times.

We tend to forget that this is a debating Chamber and that we should try to pick up points made by our colleagues. As this is likely to be the last occasion on which I will address the House, being a miner, it provides me with a good finale. I would like to pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that this order is a commentary—I think a very sad one—on the decline of an industry which, in spite of what the hon. Member for Elmet said, has not been the success story that he portrayed. I will give one or two reasons why before I touch on one or two heads of expenditure.

I am the second oldest mining Member of Parliament. As you would know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I came into this House there were about 29 mining Members of

Parliament. Without preaching or seeking to persuade people that we are as good as we think we are, I think that those 29 Members were an adornment and played a very useful part. I am not now speaking of myself, but of those who were more illustrious than me. We provided top-quality men who brought practical experience here.

When the next Parliament convenes, without a shadow of doubt under a Labour Government, there will be only about 12 mining Members. My hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) will be among the most senior of those 12. The decline has happened, as it has happened under this Government, because the best interests of the country have not always been merged with the best interests of the mining industry.

One needs a computer to follow one's own interests in the House nowadays, but a statistic provided in an answer to a question last week showed that the total number of people employed in the mining industry now is down to about 110,000. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor gave the graphic illustration of a town in south Wales where there were once about 10,000 miners and where there are now only about 12.

When I became a Labour candidate in 1961, Lancashire had two members on the national executive of the NUM. There was one member on the executive for every 20,000 members and part thereof. Lancashire is now merged with the western region and is probably down to about 7,000 members.

I apologise to the Minister for missing his speech. I thought it was to be made at the time scheduled and I should have anticipated that it would be earlier. He did not speak very long so I missed the few comments he made. I know that the Minister would have given a eulogy about the order and the various heads of expenditure. I am bound to tell him that since the Government have been in charge and since the debacle of the miners' strike—I do not want to go into that because I had a particular point of view on it—we have lost about 40,000 miners.

If I hear Ministers telling me how they are helping the mining industry, I want them to tell me that they are helping by saying that they will provide the new coal-fired power stations that I believe are desperately needed. We know that the Government are hanging fire on that. I want them to give the mining industry the same sort of attention they give to the nuclear power lobby.

I made a statement in the House the other week which was misunderstood because, not being a classical scholar, I had to give a more homely metaphor. Those who have a working class background will know that there is a working class game known as brag in which each player has three cards. It is a simple idea; a sort of poor man's poker. The lowest hand on which one could hope to win the kitty and persuade one's opponents that one has a good hand is two twos, known as a pair of deuces.

Mr. Skinner: One can have seven high if one is smart enough.

Mr. McGuire: My hon. Friend must play a different school to us. However, there is a saying, "He is bragging on a pair of deuces." Why did I use that expression for the nuclear power lobby? If one reads the history of the promotion of nuclear power, even when the late Fred Lee was the Minister of Power in the 1964 Government, one got the impression that nuclear power was going to be so abundant and cheap that it would not pay one to meter it. It was suggested that it was the greatest invention known to man. Our own people believed in that. The history of nuclear power has read like a fairy tale. The Government are persuading us again that it is the greatest thing that ever happened, ignoring the signs of great dark clouds on the horizon. Yet the coal industry is having to battle with one hand tied behind its back. That is why, when people promote nuclear power as distinct from coal-generated electricity, I say that they were bragging on a pair of deuces.

I shall now deal with exports. In my constituency I have the company that is the leading exporter of mining manufacturing machinery in the country. I am pleased to say that I was there on the day that my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian was presented with a miner's lamp, suitably inscribed, when he opened the test bed that subjects machines that are sold all over the world—to China and elsewhere—to simulated weights, heights, powers and stresses that I do not think they will meet even in the mines. It is one of the jewels in our industrial crown. I wonder what the export record is for nuclear power. I think that we gave one power station away once and I cannot see us doing much different in the future.

That is the sort of thing to which I want the Government to pay attention. In spite of the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Elmet—I do not know whether he will go into his mining areas—I think that he will be subject to some critical examination. He will need to sing a slightly different tune because the miners will say, "Here we have a Government giving us all these wonderful things but we are declining at a rate of knots."

Mr. Batiste: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to hear that the majority of decent miners understand clearly that their future lies in an industry supported by the Government through investment, a Government who are determined to stand up to the militancy, which is the industry's biggest threat.

Mr. McGuire: That is all very well. I believe that the Minister referred to the increase in productivity and the records being set daily by the miners. I tried to couple that with an action that the Government have deliberately taken. I am not sure of the precise technical term, but it was designed to encourage companies to switch to coal burning. I am not sure how long that lasted, but it was cut off. If I were to question the enthusiasm of the Minister and one of his most devoted supporters over what they were doing for the coal mining industry, I would ask, "Why has that not been continued?"

Almost every week the Minister bombards us with the success of the mining industry, and I am pleased to hear it. He tells us how company X or Y has increased its profits, that it is marvellous and that it has gone over from oil burning to coal burning. A positive way of encouraging that is to keep the scheme going, but I believe that it is about to finish. Therefore, when people tell me what wonderful things they have done I like to marry that to practical realities.

I also welcome the proposals in the order. No one with any sense would oppose them. One of the headings is "Concessionary Coal". In the past, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, I have mounted odd rearguard actions—futile though they were—to draw attention to some of the cruel anomalies on concessionary

[Mr. McGuire]

coal, and how they limited the giving of concessionary coal to widows of mineworkers, some of whom had worked in the mines all their lives. It often depended on the coroner's signature or the pneumoconiosis medical panel. Many widows were confused by the fact that the coroner's certificate said "industrial disease", as that was the pathologist's recommendation, whereas the pneumoconiosis medical panel — on whose advice the Coal Board would give concessionary coal—said "natural causes". It is almost impossible to convince a widow of that when her husband has worked many years in the mining industry—sometimes a lifetime—and has been in receipt of an industrial disease payment. I dealt with many such cases when I was pit secretary. There were buckets of sympathy but no practical help. It is impossible to say, "I am sorry. That is how the rules are defined and you cannot get concessionary coal." Some of these people now live alongside others who qualify even though they served a much shorter period in the pits, but good luck to them!

Many of these things were symbolic of the fact that the work of these miners was appreciated. Naturally I welcome anything that will continue such concessions. The problem of such people will gradually reduce because anno domini will ensure that they die off. I shall not flog this to death, but I wish there was something in the order to give them solace and comfort, particularly as this is my last chance to say a few words on this subject.

I end as I began. This is a commentary on the decline of a once great industry. I doubt whether it will again be great in terms of its size in its heyday. When I first entered the House, we talked about whether coal production should be 190 million tonnes or 220 million tonnes. For many of us the Ark of the Covenant was the forecast of Dr. Idris Jones, who, in the early 1960s, said that the coal mining industry should be gearing itself to 250 million tonnes.

A late colleague, Dick Kelly, the Member for Don Valley, used to hammer the Minister regularly about this plan, but it has continued to decline. Certain events have hastened the industry's decline, but I would rather hear Ministers say, "This is the way in which we shall get it back on its feet. We shall give it a proper place in our energy policy because compared with nuclear it is easily and outstandingly the best. We will not leave for future generations any of the problems that we are storing up through nuclear generation." If there is one more whiff of a Chernobyl all the forecasts for nuclear power in this country and elsewhere will go out the window. That has been the response in other countries, but we have not seen the light.

If the Government were really keen on promoting the coal industry and intent on doing what the bright young Member for Elmet will say when he goes around his constituency bragging on a pair of deuces—if I may use that term again — the Minister would tell us what positive steps the Government intend to take to restore the fortunes of the coal industry. If the Minister acted in that way, he would be heard with much greater conviction.

10.35 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I shall be very brief, as other hon. Members have been before me.

I want to pick up on one or two of the points made by the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) about privatisation of the collieries and mines. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Darlington has ever worked in a mine, never mind a private mine. In fact, I doubt that very much indeed. He does not know what he is talking about. He is basing his comments upon textbooks. If he considered the matter practically, or if he had ever seen a private mine working, he would not be so keen on them. I have worked in such a mine. Actually I worked for one. The benevolence of the National Coal Board in those days meant that the board lent out its craftsmen to private mines because those mines could not afford to keep them. We helped out. We put those mines in order when the inspector of mines came down. Those mines could not keep within the regulations unless they had assistance from the National Coal Board. The National Coal Board had to hold money back to ensure that the reinstatements were completed after those mines had abandoned their dependence on oil.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Darlington should consider the history of the industry and discover that the mines were nationalised purely and simply because the private mines could neither produce sufficient material nor provide the working conditions that were becoming necessary. As a result of the war, the Government realised that the products of the private mines would be inadequate, and that is why they were nationalised.

If people believe that open-casting is primarily a sweetener for deep-mined coal, they must also believe that pigs may fly. That story was put about simply to get open-casting expanded. Open-casting was carried out simply because it was more economical, less manpower intensive, and a great deal of coal could to extracted. That method created environmental problems that we are still living with in my area after 30 years. If people want open-casting they can have it. Please do not send it our way, because we do not want any more.

We want new industries in the area to make up for the old industry that has disappeared. I am not so naive as to believe that the collieries that have closed will reopen. However, I hope for a future in which the existing collieries will expand. We shall find that that will be necessary, because the Government are making the same mistake as the Labour Government in the 1960s over the closure of the collieries. We had to return to the position later and realise that a mistake had been made.

If we consider the amount of oil and gas taken and used from the North Sea at the moment in terms of coal equivalent, it is possible to measure the amount of coal we shall need in future, unless the Government are prepared to enter into the full-scale use of nuclear power stations or, if they run down the British coal mining industry, to import more coal. There is no other way for the Government to act.

British Coal Enterprise Ltd. is doing an excellent job, but we should put the jobs that it has created into perspective. The Minister said that 10,000 jobs have been created, but where are they? I know of six in my constituency — one is in a pub and another is in prefabrication. The irony is that the biggest part of that prefabrication work is ordered from British Coal. We have got six jobs in return for 6,400 jobs lost, so we must put the figures into perspective. The company is doing excellent work, and I would encourage it all the way because it must continue, but let us not run away with the idea that it will replace every job that was lost; it will not.

People are right to point out the massive redundancy payments that have been received by many grateful mine workers, but let us not forget what they were. The were given not out of the generosity and goodness of heart of the Government or British Coal; they were used to buy out jobs, because that was the easiest way to run down the industry. It has been done by Governments of both parties. I do not say that this Government must take all the blame, because the Labour Government also had a redundancy scheme. The Minister knows that my job was resettlement. But the massive redundancy payments are no longer available. We have this Bill because we must pay for those redundancies. As the Minister said, it is a continuing payment and the industry will be viable only if we keep on paying it. We would not even think of voting against such a measure. We must not be mealy-mouthed about it. We must recognise it for what it is worth.

The industry is now called the British Coal Corporation. Not so long ago, it was the National Coal Board, and when we questioned the use of "British Coal", we were told that it was just a name to be used for selling coal. It was thought that it would sell more coal using that name. Now it is called the British Coal Corporation, and it seems that we are getting rid of all the dead wood—as the Minister would probably call it, but which I believe is a necessary part of the industry — and reaching a position where private capital can be introduced. The corporation may also be sold off, but that remains to be seen.

Let us consider the people who will be caught up in redundancy but will not benefit from the massive redundancy payments that have been made. The retraining scheme is totally inadequate and should be re-examined. It cannot be done in eight weeks. In 1947, the new National Coal Board sent me away for six months' training as an electrical engineer. The board recognised that it took about six months to get the basics right before going on to technical college and university. What has changed? Why is a period of eight weeks now considered to be adequate for retraining? The industry must know from its history that it is simply running a whitewash brush over the problem. Now that the redundancy payments have disappeared, and the jobs are no longer being bought out, we must consider retraining.

The British Steel Corporation's retraining programme runs for a minimum of two years. We should consider that example seriously, because the people who will be leaving the industry, because of the change in structure, will be young men. If we hope to carry out retraining of the young men who are being made redundant or who are leaving the industry, we must look seriously at how we retrain them for future occupations.

British Steel looked seriously at the way in which it should carry out retraining. I talked to British Steel about that. It looked at the labour market and at the possibilities of jobs that might be available. Consequently, it was retraining not for a dead end, but for the future. I ask the Minister to look at retraining for the future. The minimum

[Mr. Allen McKay]

time necessary is two years, and people must be retrained for specific jobs that may become available not necessarily in the area in which they were born, but in other areas.

We must be far more constructive about training than we have been in the past now that the big redundancy payments have gone. We must look after the people who have given many years and whose fathers have given a lifetime to the industry. We owe them that. A Labour Government will expand rather than contract the industry. The Minister talked about a new base. We will build on that and expand the industry, because that is what is necessary.

10.45 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) spoke about the six jobs allocated to his constituents as a result of the setting up of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. My hon. Friend is not sure how many more people have got jobs. I am not aware of any more in great numbers, but I think that about half a dozen or eight or perhaps 10 were created on the Government quango that set up this organisation. Two of those people did their level best to run down the efforts of the people who were on strike and they got their just reward for participating in that action. Some of them already had jobs.

If my hon. Friend is drawing up a register of those who have got jobs under British Coal Enterprise Ltd., he should have a look at the brochure. Perhaps he will find a few more jobs, but I doubt whether he will get to the figures of 10,000 or 14,000 that have been mentioned. No doubt the Minister, in a flight of fancy, would say 20,000.

Hon. Members have spoken about record productivity in the British coalfield. There is no doubt that there has been record productivity every time we have got away from pit closures. One does not need to be a Pythagoras to work that out. If at any given moment the 20 or 30 pits at the bottom of the productivity table are chopped off, the net result is that those further up the table show a greater increase in productivity. That has happened under all Governments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone knows only too well that the pits at the bottom of the table at any given time could, given a bit of a chance and a breather, get to a white face or overcome whatever the trouble is, perhaps various difficulties in the strata, and find themselves three years later at the top of the league when previously they had been at the bottom. Other pits, sadly, have been shut and all the men and women involved are out of work. When they go to the unemployment exchange to get some money from the taxpayer—part of the £20-odd billion that unemployment is currently costing—they find an order from the Government saying that we have to spend more money on some sort of redundancy payments and concessionary coal payments.

Then we will be told that we have to find some more money for British Coal Enterprise Ltd., in order to provide more jobs for more bureaucrats and half a dozen people in the average coalfield constituency. Anybody looking at that from abroad or from afar would say that it was economic madness. They would ask why on earth the Government are doing it. Of course, they are doing it because this order is a follow-on from the Bill that we debated some time ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) spoke strongly about that.

That Bill was about laying the way open for privatisation in the event of a Tory victory at the general election. That is the essence of the order, because the last thing that the Tory Government want is to saddle certain areas of the coal industry with a large bill. We know from past experience that, when the Government have launched privatisations, they have ensured that the chosen sectors of the economy have been well breached by the time of the handover or sell-out, and the order continues that practice. That is what the game is all about.

It is sad that in their retreat in the search for jobs, some in the industry have even talked of working six days a week for single-time payments. It would be ridiculous if there were to be any further erosion of terms and conditions of that sort. I listened to the spokesman for the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) praising those who have declared that they will work a six-day week. He and his colleagues are telling miners that if they want a job they must work six days a week, but he and his friends turn up for work only half the time. The recent victor at Greenwich, the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes), voted only a few times in this place before we learned that she was looking for another job. Having found one job, she has obtained another, at a salary of £9,000 a year. However, the Liberal spokesman has the cheek to tell miners that they must grovel for six days a week if they are to have a job. These are the messages that come from the mouths of Liberals, and they should understand that my colleagues in Wales are not sold on the idea of a six-day week. I advise the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor and his colleagues not to get any fancy notions.

Mr. Livsey: The leadership of the south Wales NUM is in favour of the six-day week.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman should read the small print.

Mr. Livsey: The proposition is a six-day working week, and not necessarily miners working a six-day week.

Mr. Skinner: The matter will be decided soon at the NUM conference. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman confers with the leader of the Social Democratic party, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), and checks on his record of attendance in this place. He should ask his right hon. Friend what he thinks about six-day working. The right hon. Gentleman appears six days a week only on our television screens. He is prepared to appear on that medium every day of the week, five times a day on any tinpot subject under the sun. I am amazed that no interviewer has said to him, "By the way, leader of the Social Democratic party, what did you do about this issue when you were Foreign Secretary? Were you too busy signing glossy autographed photographs of yourself, which you were trying to sell but did not manage to as you trotted around the globe, doing very little apart from that?" We do not want any lectures from those who have just dropped in for a moment or two on the Liberal-SDP Benches, and who in this instance might not be around to continue the discussion after the general election.

This is a serious matter. We know that 9 million tonnes of coal are being imported and that it would be wrong to

take a partisan point of view. Why import 9 million tonnes of coal at this time, when we have so many difficulties with the balance of payments and everything else? Surely the Government should have the decency, quite apart from anything else, to follow up their candy-floss words about being against apartheid, and at least stop the coal that comes from South Africa via various routes through Amsterdam and so on. Why do the Government not have the guts to stop that imported coal?

They should go further than that. They say that they stand up for Britain. We always get a lot of patriotism from Ministers and the Prime Minister, but they never seem to put it into practice. What is the economic sense in allowing all that coal to come in? It is subsidised up to the hilt, as everybody knows. Some countries are awash with coal. They say, "I tell you what—send it to Britain. It is an easy touch. It is into monetarism. It is mad on it in certain areas, although not in the City of London, which is into subsidy in a big way. Tax relief is the order of the day in the City. But if it is manufacturing industry, send it across to Britain. It will take it on. The philosophy still holds good in certain areas."

The Government fall for that ploy, with the net result that they finish up with having to pay even more people at the unemployment exchange, and bring in some more Bills and orders to make all the redundancy payments. What nonsense. This order is about reducing jobs. It is bound to be. How can it be anything else? It recommends that one should pay more people what used to be called large redundancy payments. The only large ones that I have ever seen are those that I have read about in the newspapers for top business men — £1 million was shared between seven of them recently.

These orders reduce the capacity of those working in the pits. This is partly a paving order for privatisation, and the interesting comment from the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) was all part of the plan. One of the legs of this plan is to make sure that there is plenty of opencast production because all those interested in moving into the mining industry will be looking at that first. If they can increase the 80 million tonnes, that would be important.

However, the hon. Member for Darlington said something else. He asked why the Minister did not move on to increasing the numbers allowed to work in the private mines. All of us who have worked in the industry know that such mines are more dangerous than the mines in which we worked. One of the reasons for the limit of 30 workers is the health and safety hazard.

Another important point is that the Government are focusing their attention on places such as Selby in north Yorkshire, and the Margam complex is all part of that. Once they get greater efficiency from those pits, they will shut the smaller, less efficient and less economic pits next door. If anybody gets the fancy idea that Margam, the privatisation of Selby, the Warwickshire coalfield and the Leicestershire and South Notts coalfield will do anything for the industry, they had better think again. It will all be about maximising production in the easiest seams.

We all know from our experience that one of the benefits of nationalisation was that if there were seven seams, however, difficult some of them were, at least an attempt would be made to work them. Once privatisation gets hold, they will say, "Let's get the best three seams, the easiest, and then we will move along with our opencast friends."

The order also deals with housing. They have the cheek, under paragraph (vi) of the schedule, to talk about:

"Payment to local authorities and housing associations for the provision of housing for employees on account of their place of employment being changed."

It sounds grand; we cannot object to it on the face of it. As everybody knows who has taken part in the argument, we have been having battles and discussions with British Coal, about selling off its houses. British Coal has been encouraged by the Government with their market orientation, to sell off all its houses to some entrepreneur who will then sell them off to somebody else. A lot of the tenants in my constituency do not know who the landlord is. Some of them have disappeared into the night. The Government come before Parliament and say, "We have a little item here which will help British Coal to provide housing through local authorities and housing associations," when the job could have been done by keeping hold of those properties, as was the case until fairly recently.

I refer to concessionary coal. My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) said that he was making his last speech. I am not so sure. One can never be sure in this place. He said that he was concerned about concessionary coal payments to widows. He has raised this point every time that he has had half a chance. Successive Government Ministers have not taken up the cause, so we are asking again. I extend the point marginally because it includes others—the pre 1968 widows and some miners who are still living. Only a few hundred are left in parts of the north Derbyshire coalfield, part of Lancashire and a few scattered about in some of the other coalfields.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield is making one last effort, and I am supporting him. Surely to God the Minister could, instead of saying no, have a look at this matter. When I came into this House one of the first things that the Government of 1970-74 did, to great applause from the Tory benches, was to provide pensions for the first time to the over-80s, who never had pensions. There was great applause and the Government received wonderful publicity for it. It only affected a few. That was our argument. We said, "We know why they are doing it. They should give better pensions to everybody." They were giving these pensions for the first time to the over-80s because a lot of them had passed on. The same applies to this. A few hundred people in those coalfields have had a raw deal. Some of them worked 40 or 50 years in the pit and those widows have seen their husbands pass away, many of them of pneumoconiosis. We are asking the Minister, once again, to give a concession to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield in his last effort.

My hon. Friend said that he did not think that there would be any more great days. I would not accept that lightly. If he will cast his mind back, he will remember that there have been occasions when the industry has stabilised; it has not gone on a great leap forward, but there have been at least three occasions in my experience when the coal industry, because of market forces, the oil business and various other factors, has managed to hold on to its manpower and pits, which astounded us for a number of years.

My hon. Friend's prediction about nuclear power is probably on the ball. When it happens, there will be great days for the mining industry, because such will be the clamour, if the disaster is a bit nearer than the last one at Chernobyl, that people in all parts of the country will rightly say, "There are 300 years of coal beneath our feet.

[Mr. Skinner]

Let us put an end to nuclear power." The Government say that the nuclear industry is so productive, yet it has not been able to sell one power station. People will understand that more clearly. It is a terrible thing to have to say that it will be that kind of experience that will change matters. The oil and gas will run out, so the great days may still come. I am not throwing the towel in. One fine day, in my last days in this place and when my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield is in the other place, I will say to my hon. Friend, "The great days are here again."

11.4 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I thoroughly enjoyed the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He always makes good speeches, particularly when he is talking about the mining industry.

The difference between the Opposition and the Government Benches is that Opposition Members speak with the voice of experience, although the Liberal spokesman's only connection with mining is the fact that his grandfather was a miner. Labour Members have had mining experience, working underground at the coal face. I wonder how many Conservative Members have ever had a No. 10 shovel in their hands. I have. It is as big as a table top and you are given a whacking great heap of coal to shift.

I have listened to the contribution of Conservative Members. We hear from farmers, solicitors and City slickers in the financial world. Many hon. Members have been talking about British Telecom shares; that is what I mean by City slickers. There is more information to come out about other privatisations of public bodies.

Many Tories make their contributions and buzz off. Perhaps they are tired and have to go bed. They certainly have not stayed tonight to hear the education that has been provided by the Opposition. One Tory Member talked about surface mining. He obviously does not know anything about mining because there is a difference between surface mining and deep mining. The nation has depended on the mining industry for donkeys' years, but the Government are destroying that industry in pursuit of profit.

The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) should listen carefully. He has probably heard this before, but he will hear it again, especially on the doorsteps in his constituency when he talks to miners, particularly the older men who have retired and who suffered so that we could have decent conditions, decent pay and decent jobs in mining. They suffered and I and some of my colleagues experienced that under private ownership.

When the industry was nationalised, safety became the No. 1 priority. It was No. 3 under the private coal owners. The hon. Member for Sherwood shakes his head. He does not understand what I am saying. When I was a youngster in the pit, safety was No. 3 and earnings were No. 2. The No. 1 for the coal owners was production.

I welcome what the Minister said about record-breaking production. Miners have always been able to achieve such results. They were asked to produce during the war and they did so. They produced the energy that the nation required to win the war. They will do the same again whenever they are called on. However, if the Government destroy the mining industry we shall be unable to supply the required energy.

Chernobyl has been mentioned — the hon. Member for Sherwood has a frown on his face, but I have not heard one word from him about miners' objections to nuclear power. I am convinced that one of the reasons why the Government are running down the British coal industry is to bring in more and more nuclear power stations. The Prime Minister promised that in the pre-election period of 1979. When she got in here she talked about the number of new nuclear power stations there would be and set out the programme for such stations. It is clear what the Government are about; it is further to run down the mining industry.

There will be further pit closures in my constituency. When I was a youngster there were up to 14 pits in the area, but slowly but surely those pits have been destroyed. As a result of the Government's policies, slowly but surely the industry is being destroyed. One day we shall end up with no coal industry and we shall be sorry for it. When we get back into power we must do something about that problem. I believe that there should be a stop to any further nuclear power stations and those existing nuclear stations should be run down. We must again become sensible about the production of energy in Britain. The miners have always been asked to produce the energy requirements for the nation and they have lived up to their responsibilities.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No, it is 11.11 pm. The hon. Gentleman has just walked back into the Chamber—I do not know where he has been — and now he wants to make an intervention. If the hon. Gentleman had remained in the Chamber he could have made a speech.

We are discussing the coal mining industry and additional finance to that industry. I welcome that finance, it is a step in the right direction. However, it is nowhere near enough because of the problems that the industry faces. The point that I am seeking to make is that this Government have put all the weight of the costs of compensations and repairs — necessary because of mining subsidence — on the pits that caused that subsidence. Previous Governments had a commitment regarding those costs. However, the Government have washed their hands of the matter to save money. The end result of that saving is that the Government, through the National Coal Board or British Coal, as they now like to call it, are now telling those people who are making claims for compensation or repairs to damaged properties, "Sorry the damage is done" Those people are getting nowhere with their claims.

No compensation is being offered and no repairs are being carried out. That is the way that the wicked Tory Government work. It is high time that the Minister took responsibility and told the NCB or British Coal that it has a responsibility to the people, not just in my constituency, but in the constituency of the hon. Member for Sherwood. However, in any debates that we have had regarding compensation and repair to properties as a result of mining subsidence we have not heard a word from the hon. Gentleman. It is high time that the hon. Gentleman and other Conservatives whose constituencies face mining subsidence problems followed our lead.

I had hoped that the Minister would do something about the problem, but he has done little. Representations have been made and I even went so far as to introduce a

ten-minute Bill on the problem. We have not met with much success yet. I am hoping to get a Second Reading for the Bill on 8 May so that it can go into Committee, come back for a Third Reading and we can get something done for the people in the mining areas.

I appreciate the time and I shall be brief. I wish to discuss concessionary fuel. My hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover and for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) have mentioned this problem. The Minister has been told time and time again about it. There are elderly people in my constituency, especially widows, who are receiving concessionary fuel. They receive smokeless fuel in lieu of cash. Because of the wicked winter the fuel went nowhere near keeping them warm. The fuel was gone in next to no time. The cash was gone, because as the price went up people could buy less fuel for the cash that they received. Because of cuts in the rate support grant the local authorities have not been able to pay for the fuel. The hon. Member for Sherwood should not shake his head because I am explaining the facts. In my constituency the local authority cannot afford to change its suppliers because the rate support grant has been cut. The Government have cut the grant each year since 1979.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: I will not give way.

I welcome the Southampton coal-fired power station. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said, the Government propose to ship coal from South Africa to fire that station. The Government have not denied it. I ask the Minister to state tonight that the Southampton power station will be fired by British coal. For years coal from the north-east has been transported to the south. That should be continued. The coal should be transported by barge—or by some other means—to the south. The Minister must deny that the Government intend to import South African coal and say that they will use coal from the north-east for the Southampton power station.

11.17 pm

Mr. Eadie: I do not want to detain the Minister, because he has many comments to make. The debate has been interesting and perhaps there can be some unanimity. Perhaps the debate has proved that King Coal is not dead and that the coal reserves are an insurance for our people.

My purpose is to take up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire), who has perhaps made his last contribution in the House. The House is richer for his contributions. He made a passionate plea to the Minister. He has made that plea repeatedly during his distinguished career. He talked about the people who are left out. I do not know whether the Minister is feeling generous, or whether he has the power to be generous, but when he considers my hon. Friend's contribution and the hard work that he has done in the House, he might find it possible to say that he will consider what my hon. Friend said about concessionary coal for those left out because the schemes are not retrospective. My hon. Friend's argument was amplified by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

The Minister has many aspects to respond to, such as nuclear power and the future of the mining industry. I hope that he will comment on the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield. It may be his last contribution. However, his membership of the House has been very distinguished.

11.20 pm

Mr. David Hunt: This has been a fascinating debate. I hope that the House will understand that in the 10 minutes that remain I shall not have time to cover all the points raised. I shall write to those hon. Members to whose questions I do not have time to reply.

All those who have spoken in the debate have been united by their concern for the coal industry, but I highlight the remarkable contrast between the contributions from the Government Benches and those from the Opposition Benches. On the Government side there were forward-looking, positive speeches from my hon. Friends who are close to the men whom they represent. My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), who has more producing pits in his constituency than any other hon. Member, represents the brave men of Nottinghamshire. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who was until recently a coal face worker at Littleton colliery, knows what it is like underground. He probably has the most recent experience underground of any Member in the House of Commons. We are proud to have him on the Conservative Benches.

My hon. Friends the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) and for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, all listened, I thought, with rapt attention to a remarkably good speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste). Indeed, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe turned to me and said "Do you really need to wind up the debate after a speech as good as that?" I hope that he will forgive me for quoting him. The best thing about the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet was that he looked forward well into the future. The worst thing about speeches from Opposition Members was that they were once again voices anchored in the past. I suppose that the strangled cries of dying Socialism are not a nice noise for the House to hear, but it is still going on, and it drags on and on.

One of these days I hope very much that Opposition Members will lift up their eyes and see the new spirit in the coalfield, the fine fellowship that I find underground at the coal face at present and that I found at Agecroft colliery in Manchester only a few weeks ago, where the men told me that the last thing they wanted was a Labour Government. They believed that life would be as black as the coal that they worked if Labour were ever returned to office because they felt that power would return to the discredited president of the NUM. I just hope that one day they will lift up their eyes and see that new spirit in the coalfield.

I shall respond to the points raised by the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). He asked why we have the order when we have only just passed a Coal Industry Act. That is, of course, because the order follows directly from section 3 of the Coal Industry Act 1987 and seeks to introduce those very provisions that I spoke about in Committee when we discussed that measure.

[Mr. David Hunt]

The hon. Gentleman questioned whether I had mentioned retraining and employment opportunities. If he checks *Hansard*, he will find that I said that the order provided for support towards a broad range of costs associated with restructuring, including costs of redundancy and early retirement, changes of work and place of employment, retraining for persons who are to leave or who have left the corporation through redundancy or incapacity, and costs associated with the promotion of new employment opportunities. Those are crucial points.

I respond to the hon. Gentleman's invitation to give a progress report on British Coal Enterprise Ltd, because the Government are encouraged by what has happened so far. For the first time we have a company dedicated to the provision of assistance for job creation in coal mining areas. That company's aim is to assist in the creation of jobs on a sufficent scale to offset the jobs lost during the restructuring of the industry. Since that company was formed in October 1984, it has committed £27 million in support of 1,184 projects, with a combined capital cost of £186 million, and assisted in the creation of 16,102 job opportunities by the end of March. Therefore, additional investment of over £160 million has been triggered off by direct action by British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

I challenge Opposition Members to stop discrediting or seeking to discredit the work of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. I recognise that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) did not do so — he mentioned that it had done excellent work — but other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), continually try to discredit the work of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. However, the facts fly in the face of what the hon. Gentleman sought to persuade the House.

It has never been the case, under the redundant mineworkers' pension scheme, which was introduced by a Labour Government, that people working in the licensed mines would benefit. Similarly, it has not been the case that those working in the private open-cast sector would benefit. Now with the redundant mineworkers' pension scheme at an end, the new arrangements, announced by the chairman of British Coal, apply to the employees of British Coal, not to those employees who are involved in the private sector. The question of royalties had no bearing on this question. It is for the employers in the private sector to provide for their own employees.

In 1979, when this Government came to office and inherited the coal industry from the stewardship of the hon. Member for Midlothian, the United Kingdom was a net importer of 2 million tonnes per year. Within four years, we were able to change that and this country became a net exporter of 2 million tonnes. Sadly, the strike destroyed that position. However, with the fine efforts of the men in the coalfields, I understand that we shall reach a position where coal is even more competitive than it is now. We cannot ignore our competitive position in world markets.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington challenged me to tell him exactly what would happen in future orders as regards percentage and responsibility for terms and conditions. I am happy to confirm that, as British Coal returns to full viability, the proportion of the costs borne by it will be increased. However, I would not wish to anticipate the percentage support to be specified in future orders, nor when it would prove appropriate for British Coal to bear all such future costs.

To the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) I would just say, "Yes, there has been a decline in numbers in south Wales, especially during the past 18 months." However, that has not been accompanied by a decline in output. Therefore, I do not call that a decline in the industry. Productivity has risen as never before in south Wales, and miners have been able to maintain the same level of output although with much reduced numbers. That is a marvellous example for the future of the coal industry.

I have also been asked about open-cast coal. Of course, open-cast mining has a vital role to play. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West stressed — he knows from his own work at Littleton colliery, as I found out by going underground at Lea Hall colliery — that deep-mined coal from such mines is unsaleable unless it is sweetened and blended with open-cast coal. Therefore, open-cast coal has an important part to play when it is combined with deep-mined production, and it is not to be seen as directly in competition with jobs in the deep mine sector. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is disagreeing with me. Some deep mines require open-cast coal to sweeten their output so that an acceptable product is produced for the customers.

Mr. Haynes: I never mentioned it.

Mr. Hunt: I am sorry. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was heckling me. Obviously he was not.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor raised the issue of damage to the environment. Planning procedures ensure that an application to work open-cast coal does not go ahead without all the arguments for and against the development being aired, thus allowing for a balanced judgment. The Open-cast Executive spends a great deal of time and effort to reduce the impact of its sites and to restore them once coaling has ceased. I do not have time to mention the other points about open-cast mining now.

I am sad that the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) has made his last speech. We all remember the courage he showed during a difficult period which most hon. Members have tried to avoid mentioning. I, too, shall try not to make the mistake of doing so in detail. He is a brave man, and I am sorry that we have heard his last speech. He will know, as the hon. Member for Bolsover knows, that for many years the entitlement to concessionary coal was governed by a complex series of local and district agreements, some of which dated from many years past. Many anomalies often caused disputes and——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15.*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 6th April, be approved.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE

Ordered,

That the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 84 (Constitution of standing committees), paragraph (1) of Standing Order No.86 (Nomination of standing

committees) and Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) shall apply to the Code of Guidance for Sites of Special Scientific Interest as if the said Code were a draft statutory instrument; and that the said Code be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Package Holidays (Insurance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I raise the question of monitoring tour operators' codes of conduct because of the circumstances surrounding a holiday in a Greek apartment booked through Intasun in June 1986 by my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, and their daughter Emily, now aged two.

On studying the Intasun brochure my constituents accepted the recommended holiday insurance. Perhaps it should be noted that Intasun, like many other operators, makes it difficult to decline its preferred insurance as it is necessary specifically to refuse it. Nevertheless, the Shaws were satisfied with the description of the insurance, and I am not surprised, as it states:

"Enjoy complete peace of mind with Intasun holiday insurance with Eagle Star Group . . . It's one of the finest available — excellent cover for you and your family. It provides total security."

The booking form asks for any special requests and the Shaws requested a cot for their young daughter. The request was subsequently shown typed on the official Intasun invoices. Finally, Mr. and Mrs. Shaw took confidence from Intasun's fair trading policy, commitment No. 5 of which states:

"We do not exclude or limit our liability to you for any loss or damage sustained by you as a result of the negligence of our employees or agents."

No wonder that Mr. and Mrs. Shaw felt well prepared for the holiday.

They duly arrived at their destination and found the cot in place. They were informed that it had been arranged and paid for by the Intasun representative and that they owed her the money. Unfortunately, the cot was unsuitable for all but the youngest babies and young Emily fell out of it and cut her head badly on a metal strip on the marble floor. That caused a considerable gash requiring six stitches. The damage was bad enough but could have been much worse, and the little girl was caused considerable pain and suffering and the danger of a permanent scar. The Shaws were unable to obtain a more satisfactory cot and eventually received their money back from the representative.

On returning to the United Kingdom the Shaws first discovered that there was no personal accident insurance that covered that particular injury, so Mrs. Shaw wrote to Intasun, pointing out the danger of using such cots and asking that something be done about it to avoid even worse accidents or even a fatality, which is possible as a result of such an accident. At the same time, quite reasonably, she asked whether there was any possibility of compensation for out-of-pocket expenses, particularly for taxi fares to and from the hospital. She received a fairly full reply of 28 July 1986, in which Intasun expressed regret, but not much more. There was no mention of compensation and no liability or responsibility accepted for supplying the cot.

Mrs. Shaw wrote again saying that she thought such an important safety issue should be well publicised and mentioned that she had discovered that she could not address her complaint about Intasun to any form of official arbitration. That was a shock to her as she was under the impression that complaints against tour

[Mr. Peter Fry]

operators could go to arbitration. However, she discovered that complaints such as hers, relating to personal injury, were specifically excluded. Intasun replied that it had asked hotel managements to make cots as safe as possible but

"could only hope they would comply."

In the same letter to Mrs. Shaw it said that the subject had already been publicised on the media in this country and that parents should be aware of the dangers. However, it went on to say:

"Intasun holidays are doing everything within our power to try and ensure that cots provided are safe for children and small babies."

The Shaws received no satisfaction from the company so, at the end of August, they came to see me. Early in September I wrote to Intasun saying that I thought it had some obligation towards the family. The head of its legal services, a Mr. John de Vial, replied asking for more information and promised "urgent attention". I replied on 29 September and on 7 October Mr. de Vial, promised detailed comments "as soon as possible." On 2 January I asked for a reply. On 4 February I asked for a reply. It was a few days after that that I met an Intasun director at an Association of British Travel Agents seminar and mentioned the delay. I had still received no reply. On 27 February I met another Intasun executive and told him that my patience was now exhausted.

Miraculously, a letter appeared on the House letter board dated 27 February enclosing a copy of a letter dated 30 December. The excuse was that two separate letters had been sent to me, which apparently had not reached me. I cannot know whether that was true. Letters can be backdated. All I know is that the odds of two letters being sent to a Member of Parliament at the House and not reaching him are astronomical. Post Office officials confirm that. However, the reply offered no redress to my constituents and no acceptance of liability. Indeed, it specifically put the onus on Mr. and Mrs. Shaw. In a further letter, Mr. de Vial specifically said that the transaction was a matter between the family and the property management. That entirely ignored the part played by the Intasun representative. Indeed, the only supposedly helpful remark that Mr. de Vial made was to suggest that the Shaws should take action in the Greek courts, perhaps with the aid of the Shaws' European Member of Parliament. That is the position we have reached now.

I view Intasun in a poor light and I would certainly not book any holiday with the company. I give fair warning to those who do that there does not appear to be an effective response to complaints, nor can I promise an early reply to any letters that might be addressed to it.

Certain principles seem to have been raised by this case of a personal injury incurred while on holiday. First, the average holidaymaker taking out the normal comprehensive insurance is under the impression that he and his family are covered by such insurance. That is clearly not the case. The personal accident cover is clearly inadequate. Secondly, there is the fact that in the event of any accident there is no arbitration procedure for action against the holiday company as there is with other types of claim. Thirdly, the problem in such cases is that the only recourse would be action against the hotelier through the local courts. For all practical purposes that would seem to be out of the question except in the case of fairly serious injuries involving heavy damage. Fourthly, a great concern is the way in which tour operators seem to be able to skate round responsibility for any accidents that occur in accommodation that they have booked. Therefore, it is right to ask what can be done in the future. I believe that ABTA tries to be a reputable, public-spirited organisation, but, as an article in the Sunday press only yesterday reminded us, it is finding it impossible to persuade tour operators to agree on a common insurance policy.

However, millions of our fellow countrymen will go abroad on holiday this year. They will think they have adequate insurance, that the tour operators have some liability and that in the event of any dispute there will be arbitration. They will be wrong on all three counts.

What solutions are available? First, all operators should issue leaflets such as that issued by Horizon Holidays. This specifically mentions the danger of cots that may be unsuitable for young children. But even that excellent leaflet does not point to the very wide gap in insurance cover that is usually available.

Secondly, ABTA should re-examine the codes of conduct and wonder whether, if so large an operator as Intasun can act in the way that I have outlined, the codes are not strong enough. Equally, if ABTA considers that they are, should not Intasun be disciplined or shown up for the way in which it behaved?

Thirdly, if it is accepted that it will take some time to deal with this vexed question of personal injury and to devise a code of conduct that will deal with it, ABTA could recommend ex-gratia payments until a new code can be agreed that will make it impossible for a British tour operator to wriggle out of a liability that it might have to cover in this country.

That is the real point. Had there been a similar calamity in this country the Shaws could have taken effective action. That would have enabled them to claim compensation for their daughter.

I remind the House that the cot was mentioned in the original invoice, that it was specifically obtained by the Intasun representative and that the company representative paid for it and was reimbursed by the Shaws. Perhaps most importantly, surely the company's representative on the site was in a far better position to know whether the cot that was ordered was suitable for the young girl and in a far better position than the parents to make such a decision. I suggest that in this respect Intasun's response is misleading if not downright untruthful. In these circumstances, no British tour operator should be able to wriggle out of any responsibility.

I am aware that the whole question of personal accident insurance is very tricky, and the likelihood is that it is difficult to arrange cover for a child as young as this. But many people who will be injured will be in employment and would expect compensation on a weekly basis should they have an accident abroad. It is worth noting that statistically one is more likely to have an accident on holiday than at work.

I therefore look to ABTA to find ways in which such cover can be extended in a better manner than hitherto. A few years ago such cover was available as part of the normal holiday insurance. It has been cut out in recent years, presumably in order to save money.

ABTA has a great responsibility to put the tour operators' house in order. I accept that it does not have the kind of powers that my hon. Friend has, but, after all,

it is supposed to be responsible for these codes of conduct and for ensuring that they are adhered to. I stress that in the meantime ex-gratia payments on a modest scale would do much to give confidence where, as I have shown, confidence is lacking at present. I therefore look forward to my hon. and learned Friend's reply. The holidays of many of our countrymen may well be ruined by accidents this year. Surely the time has come for us to try to ensure that any accidents that happen to people in future have a happier ending than the case to which I have referred tonight.

11.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) on securing the opportunity of bringing this subject to the attention of the House. It is always distressing to learn of accidents befalling British families while on holiday abroad and particularly so when children are hurt. I sincerely hope that the daughter of my hon. Friend's constituents makes a full recovery and is none the worse for her experience.

My hon. Friend has made some interesting suggestions about protection for consumers who suffer personal injury on holiday. I am sure that he will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the details of any specific dispute between consumer and tour operator, which could be a matter ultimately for the courts. Existing laws and codes of practice already provide extensive protection for holidaymakers. However, the extent to which the law would apply in individual cases would depend upon the facts of each case and the terms of any contract or contracts which may exist. It may therefore be helpful if I explain the position in general terms.

In the first instance, holidaymakers have a significant measure of protection under the law. Although in the United Kingdom no laws specifically and exclusively govern rights and duties between those who provide package holidays and those who purchase them, the basic legal position is primarily governed by the ordinary, general law of contract and, in some circumstances, by the law of tort. The law is based upon common law and equitable principles developed over a long period by judicial decisions and modified from time to time by statutory provisions.

Package tours comprise a number of different elements, including travel, food and accommodation at a resort. The holidaymaker may enter into a contract with a tour operator to provide any or all of these services. The relationship between the parties is governed by the terms of their contract. The basis for the contract is generally set out in the booking conditions laid down in the tour operator's brochure. Contractual rights and obligations and any exclusions specifically provided for will vary from operator to operator. To the extent that the contract does not specifically provide for certain rights or obligations, terms or conditions may be derived from the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982. This Act requires that a provider of services fulfils his obligations with reasonable care and skill.

The contract with the tour operator is not necessarily the only contract entered into as an integral part of a package holiday. It is not uncommon for the holiday-maker to enter into a particular arrangement on arrival at an hotel for specific facilities or services. In those circumstances the contract will be governed by local law, and the tour operator is unlikely to be a party to any such contract.

Exclusions from liability in specific contractual terms, or from terms implied under the Supply of Goods and Services Act, will be subject to the provisions of the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977. Under the 1977 Act, terms which purport to exclude liability for death or personal injury resulting from a tour operator's negligence are void. Other clauses purporting to exclude liability for negligence in other circumstances are enforceable only if reasonable in all the circumstances. Liability may also arise in the law of tort if injury or loss is caused by negligent acts or omissions or results from negligent mis-statements by the tour operator or those for whom he is responsible.

The remedy for breach of any of these provisions is by civil proceedings for damages. I know that the general public often feel inhibited from taking these grievances to court because of what the believe to be the lengthy delays and costs involved. May I remind the House that claims for £5,000 or less are heard in the county courts and that under the small claims scheme disputes involving £500 or less — a figure which is currently under review — are automatically referred for arbitration once a defence is filed. The scheme is intended to be as quick, easy and inexpensive as possible. To this end, procedures have been simplified to enable consumers to make these claims without employing a solicitor to represent them.

My hon. Friend mentioned the ABTA codes of practice. Those codes, one for the travel agents and the other for the tour operators, were drawn up in consultation with the Office of Fair Trading and prescribe rules to be observed by all member companies in areas such as description of holidays, booking conditions, alterations, cancellations and price variations. Failure to observe the code may result in the member company being fined or expelled from the association. The House will no doubt be aware that ABTA members provide the vast majority of package holidays from the United Kingdom. Under the ABTA rules, tour operator members are required to summarise accurately in their brochures any insurance facilities they offer alongside the holiday package. ABTA travel agents are required to draw the attention of their clients to insurance facilities and cover suitable to the clients' requirements.

In the event of a dispute, the ABTA code for tour operators provides for arbitration, but, as my hon. Friend said, the arbitration scheme does not extend to claims mainly or solely in respect of physical injury or illness or their consequences. The scheme is operated simply and cheaply on a documents-only basis, without the need for either side to employ a solicitor, and it is not surprising that claims related to personal injury are excluded, given the exceptional, and frequently complex, nature of such claims.

In disputes with insurers, there are two schemes whereby private policyholders can seek arbitration without having to resort to potentially costly legal action. The Insurance Ombudsman Bureau will investigate complaints about member companies where policyholders have failed to get satisfaction from the chief executive of the company concerned. The service is free to policyholders, and if a policyholder accepts the Ombudsman's decision, it is binding on both member company and policyholder. If the policyholder rejects the decision, he may pursue the complaint in the courts.

[Mr. Michael Howard]

Some insurance companies subscribe to the personal insurance arbitration service which operates under the auspices of the Institute of Arbitrators, as in the case of the ABTA scheme. An independent arbitrator is appointed to consider a dispute, and both parties must agree to go to arbitration. The arbitrator's decision is binding on both parties and has the force of a legal award. If the policyholder is dissatisfied with the outcome, he does not have the right to litigation.

My hon. Friend contended that the average holidaymaker, in taking out the normal comprehensive insurance, is under the impression that he and his family are covered by such insurance. This is clearly not necessarily the case, depending upon the terms of the policy.

I have already outlined the obligations which ABTA imposes on its members, and the House will recall that member travel agents are required to draw their clients' attention to insurance facilities suitable to the clients' requirements and that tour operators must accurately summarise in their brochures any facilities that they offer. But most people would accept that it is in the consumer's best interest to have adequate insurance cover for his needs; and considerable effort has been made by Government, consumer organisations and the travel industry alike to get this message across to the holidaymaker. It is a basic principle that the consumer should satisfy himself that he has adequate insurance cover before he goes on holiday. He must therefore decide whether any policy which is on offer is adequate for any needs he may have or whether any additional cover may be required.

Holiday insurance arrangements have developed alongside the massive growth of the package foreign holiday industry. Much holiday insurance is similarly packaged for a mass market. Such insurance policies are intended to meet normal needs for a relatively short fixed period. The cover provided is standard, to keep administrative costs low, and the product competitive. Premiums, too, are low. A typical policy for a 10 to 14-night holiday might give cancellation cover, medical expenses abroad, hospital benefit, certain personal accident benefits and cover for personal baggage and money up to specific limits. It is also open to the holidaymaker to take out additional cover in a particular area, for example to cover the cost of legal expenses when making a court claim against someone who is legally liable for causing personal injury.

My hon. Friend suggested that ABTA should do more to see that holidaymakers are properly covered or at least fully understand the implications of what cover is available. The Director General of Fair Trading is currently conducting an exercise to monitor the effectiveness of the ABTA codes of practice.

The Director General of Fair Trading still has to discuss the survey with ABTA before publication of a report. He will explore whether it would be feasible or desirable to incorporate into the codes any obligation on the part of tour operators about safety standards in the accommodation and facilities that they provide.

Holidays abroad inevitably involve some element of risk, or at least the unpredictable. Therefore, it is only prudent that holidaymakers should satisfy themselves that they have adequate insurance cover. If they are in any doubt about the adequacy of a policy they should seek advice on taking additional cover to meet their particular requirements.

If things unfortunately do go wrong, I have drawn the House's attention to the considerable degree of protection for holidaymakers which already exists in law in the ABTA codes and in other arbitration schemes. The Government believe that the means whereby an aggrieved consumer may seek redress — either through the civil courts or by arbitration — are substantial. If consumers are unsure of their rights or of how to proceed in litigation, they should take advantage of the advice provided by citizen's advice bureaux or by their solicitor.

I have not heard in the debate any arguments that give me reason to think that the present level of protection for holidaymakers is inadequate or that the means of redress are unsound. There is always scope for improvement and the Government take a close interest in the monitoring carried out by the Director General of Fair Trading. I shall ask him to consider in the context of his current review the matter of exclusion from arbitration in the tour operators' code of practice of claims resulting from injury or illness. The answer to many of the problems that arise is not more controls but better use by the consumer of the remedies that already exist.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 28 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Accommodation Standards)

1. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will undertake a review of unpublished reports of visits made by Her Majesty's inspectors to determine what recent trends are shown in the numbers and proportions of lessons seen where poor or unsuitable accommodation was considered to be restricting the quality of work; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): In their national survey reports Her Majesty's inspectors draw on evidence from all types of inspection, including those which do not result in published reports or have not yet done so. All such survey reports have commented on the state of accommodation of schools or colleges. Undoubtedly, future reports will do the same.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Why is the Minister so coy about publishing these reports, which are bound to show that teachers are coping remarkably well in appallingly deteriorating conditions? Is he aware that in Leeds there are a number of schools where teachers must double up because they cannot occupy accommodation? I know of one school in west Leeds, Christchurch primary school, where a temporary classroom which has been there since the war cannot be occupied during the winter because it cannot be heated. The report should be published.

Mr. Dunn: I am somewhat mystified by the approach of the Liberal party in the House on this matter. There are many different types of inspections. Only some of those are intended to lead to the publication of reports. Those that are intended for publication are always published. The House must congratulate the Government on taking the decision in the early part of 1983 to publish the reports of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his point about the Government making Her Majesty's inspectors' reports available. Has he seen the recent report which suggests that in inner London, while the majority of lessons were well provided for with small classes and excellent resources, the majority of science teaching lessons were regarded as unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory? It is the quality of the teachers that counts.

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend is quite right in what she says. Undoubtedly the usefulness of the inspectors' reports is that they can be a lever for the improvement of quality of teachers and that which is taught, and I recognise and welcome that.

Mr. Duffy: Has the Minister had a chance to study the recently published report by Her Majesty's inspectors on education in Sheffield following a two-year investigation? It highlights much outstanding work. Some of that, notably in my own constituency, is carried out in the type of accommodation which other less impressive local educational authorities have long since left behind. What conclusion does he draw from that?

Mr. Dunn: The conclusion that I draw from the publication of that report, the recent report on the London borough of Brent, and many other reports which have gone through our Department in recent years is that it is essential to inform people of the state, quality and levels of school activity in the communities in which they live.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my hon. Friend not have some difficulty in understanding the concern of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) about overcrowding, bearing in mind that the alliance plans to restrict the charitable status of independent schools will drive a great many people who presently educate their children in the independent sector back into the state sector? Would that not increase the sort of overcrowding about which the hon. Gentleman is crying crocodile tears?

Mr. Dunn: It is worth placing on the record the fact that all the Opposition parties are committed to doing tremendous damage to, or the destruction of, the independent sector.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister not accept that there is overwhelming evidence from the reports of Her Majesty's inspectors of the steady deterioration of school buildings and of the major problems with which teachers are faced in having to work in inadequate conditions? However good the teacher and pupils, if we have buildings where the roof leaks and the windows are unsatisfactory it is extremely difficult to give one's best. What will the Government do about the problems in places such as Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford, with regard to the lack of funds for school buildings?

Mr. Dunn: I share the concern expressed by the inspectorate and others, who have made clear their point of view about the poor physical state of many school buildings. However, that is not a new event. It springs from the gradual effects of neglect over the past 20 years. I remind the House that the problem in the London borough of Brent had nothing to do with the quality of school buildings; it was the quality of management and the quality of teaching.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

2. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the funding of the GCSE examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: In the past three months we have received 150 representations about the funding of the GCSE examinations.

The Government have made substantial provision for the successful launch of the GCSE. We look to local education authorities to direct that provision in support of GCSE work in their schools.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend confirm that a sum of over £250,000 is being provided by the Government for GCSE examinations in Bolton—a sum fully in line with others being provided elsewhere for schools? Will he look into the provision of top-up sums for Bolton council to ensure that sufficient funds are available in total?

Mr. Dunn: I am happy to confirm what my hon. Friend has said. Last year the Government provided a total of £112,900 for GCSE expenditure in Bolton. This year the Government are providing for expenditure of £60,700, through education support grants for books and equipment. We have also provided £95,000-worth of expenditure for training Bolton's GCSE teachers. I undertake to continue to review top-up expenditure.

Mr. Ashdown: The Secretary of State keeps on telling us that there is adequate funding for GCSE, but everywhere we hear—from parents, teachers and local education authorities—that there is a desperate situation in the making with too little—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Ashdown.

Mr. Ashdown: We hear that there is a desperate situation in the making, with too little funding being provided too late and beginning to blight the future of 600,000 children. To resolve this matter, will the Secretary of State take action similar to that which he took in the face of public concern about Brent, by calling for an HMI report to be produced urgently to look into GCSE funding in, say, 100 representative schools across the country?

Mr. Dunn: I have no need to do that. Her Majesty's Inspectorate judges that these courses have got off to a satisfactory start and that pupils are generally enthusiastic about their GCSE lessons. HMI has said that on average there are sufficient material resources in schools at this stage.

Mr. Jamet: How much additional money are the Government providing in the current year for GCSE, and how much does that work out per child in the fourth or fifth year on average? Can the Government take action to ensure that the local education authorities do not purloin any of this money for other purposes? Will he ask them to provide an assurance that they are spending that money for the purpose for which it was intended?

Mr. Dunn: This year the Government's plans provides for the spending of £100 million of GCSE non-teaching costs — that is, for books, equipment, materials and ancillary staff. We shall continue to monitor carefully the resources that local education authorities target to their schools in support of GCSE activities.

Mr. Radice: Is it not the case that only £25 million is being hypothecated for the GCSE examination? Is not the real truth that head teachers and parents alike recognise that the GCSE examination is under-funded and under-prepared and that there are far too many reports coming in of inadequate supplies of books, equipment and material, as well as shortages of teachers and lack of training? Is it not the case that if we are to rescue this examination from being a damaging failure the Secretary of State must take immediate action?

Mr. Dunn: This examination and its funding are the best endowed of any examination in recent history. We will, of course, continue to monitor the direction of funds by local education authorities to the funding of GCSE activities, but that, of course, is a matter for them.

City Technology Colleges

4. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what features of grammar school education he envisages the new city technology colleges adopting; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): My intention is that city technology colleges should develop new ways of improving the quality of education in a number of urban areas drawing on examples of existing good practice in maintained and independent secondary schools, including grammar schools.

Mr. Bruinvels: Having always admired the work and dedication of staff at all our grammar schools, may I say how much I am encouraged by the news that Leicester is likely to receive a city technology college. I urge my right hon. Friend to give the go-ahead for that college as quickly as possible, as I know how much the students will benefit by the type of system that my right hon. Friend so ably presented to the House. It will certainly encourage all our young children to get on and develop.

Mr. Baker: I am glad that my hon. Friend is pressing me for a city technology college in Leicester. I very much hope that it will be possible to find sponsors for one—certainly it might be possible to find sponsors elsewhere in the east midlands. I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome such a college, as it will increase the choice for parents, which is presently limited, for free education from 11 to 18.

Mr. Janner *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) is seizing his opportunity.

Mr. Janner: The hon. and learned Member is very grateful for his opportunity to ask the Minister whether he thinks that Leicester, along with other cities, would be much better served if it had adequate educational resources. That would ensure that we have enough nursery schools, enough facilities for our primary and secondary schools and proper education for older people instead of being starved of resources, the means for which have been cut by this awful Government.

Mr. Baker: The only opportunities that the hon. and learned Gentleman can seize are those created for him by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). The resources available for city technology colleges are not at the expense of local education authorities' expenditure. The money that has been provided for CTCs is extra money. Therefore, the local education authorities will not lose money through the establishment of such schools.

Mr. Holt: Would my right hon. Friend care to say that the new CTCs, like grammar schools, will be places of

excellence, hard work, discipline and respect for teachers and the opportunities that they present—especially in my constituency, where planning permission has already been granted by the Labour-controlled authority for a CTC on Teesside?

Mr. Baker: Yes, I have been very glad to hear that my hon. Friend's local authority is prepared to provide a site for a CTC in Langbaurgh. I think that that decision shows the authority's foresight. At least one local company is prepared to come forward—I suspect others will do so—to provide the private funding. I am sure that, as a result of that CTC, the quality of education and the choice available to the parents in my hon. Friend's constituency will be enormously increased.

Mr. Sheerman: But surely the Secretary of State must now know how damaging and divisive the city technology colleges will be. He has been told that by every major organisation and every reputable expert in the education world. Indeed, recently the director general of the CBI, John Banham, called the city technology colleges an "irrelevancy". What has the Minister to say about that? What has he to say about the more interesting experiments conducted on the Boston pattern to achieve a better relationship with industry, not a divisive one?

Mr. Baker: Many companies have come forward to support the CTCs.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] I shall shortly be in a position to announce a third CTC. I assure the Opposition that sponsorship for others has been pledged and, in the course of time, we shall be announcing further CTCs.

On the question of starving resources, I remind the Opposition that I do not agree that the CTCs will drain off the teachers. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) should appreciate that the numbers for teacher training this year have shown a dramatic increase. Overall there has been an increase of 14 per cent. in applications for later this year. There has been a 42 per cent. increase for mathematics teacher training, 80 per cent. for physics teachers and about 92 per cent. for craft design technology teachers. That shows that many young people want to go into the teaching profession.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does not the opposition to this concept indicate the cultural divide between us, because we on the Government side are looking for choice and variety and all the Opposition parties want just one option—the local authority? Is my right hon. Friend aware that in some authorities commercial and planning pressures are being placed upon those who would help this system? I find that utterly disgraceful.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right. Those who oppose the principle of city technology colleges do so because they want to maintain the monopoly of the local education authority. We want to provide choice and variety—significant and real choice for parents. The city technology colleges that we have launched point the way to many other types of schools that we have in mind for after the election.

School Closures

5. **Mr. Wertch** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current criteria and practice relating to the closure of schools in rural areas.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend considers all proposals for the closure of schools on their merits, but he would expect local authorities and voluntary bodies, in formulating their proposals, to take account of the general principle set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" concerning the size of thresholds at which schools of different types can economically deliver a satisfactory curriculum. They must also take account of the wider considerations, including the distances to be travelled to alternative schools in the event of closure and of the age of the children making those journeys.

Mr. Wertch: I thank the Minister for that answer. Does he realise that there is a great deal of discontent about, and indeed outright opposition to, the closure of many small rural primary schools? Does he further realise that many of these schools have built for themselves sound reputations with generations of children and that they are a social focus of village life? Will the Minister take it on board that there needs to be a flexible examination of each case, because at present, particularly in Suffolk, there is a great deal of opposition and discontent about these closures?

Mr. Dunn: As the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Wertch) knows, I have the responsibility for meeting hon. Members from all parts of the House who bring deputations from the communities that they represent about proposals for school closures and amalgamations. The strength of feeling in urban and rural communities is not lost upon me. Under the law, the task to which we have to respond is to consider individual proposals on their merits. I can gladly give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we do just that.

Sir John Farr: In view of the great importance of the village schools that are under threat, can my hon. Friend assure the House that he will treat these as special cases? Moreover, in future will he make arrangements to ensure that no closure will be permitted without specific ministerial consent?

Mr. Dunn: Yes, Sir. There has to be ministerial consent to any proposal in any event, and I have to recognise the degree of support that rural schools may command in local communities. However, we have to consider the educational and financial arguments for closure, as well as the arguments that closures may affect the local community.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Is the Minister aware that in Cornwall over 100 rural schools face closure under present Government criteria? Does he not agree that it would make more sense to change those criteria so that the wider community in the villages is taken into account in deciding the future of those small rural schools?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman may care to spend some time reading our draft circular entitled "Providing for Quality". That circular talks about the desirable minimum sizes of different types of school. It was never intended for that minimum size level to be interpreted as narrowly prescriptive. The circular makes it clear that a true assessment of the viability of an individual school must take account not only of its size but of the ethos of the school, the quality, balance and expertise of its teachers and, of course, its non-teacher support, as well as links with neighbouring schools and the community.

Mr. McCrindle: In secondary education, is it not a fact that comprehensive schools in rural areas, such as Ongar comprehensive school in my constituency, can survive on an entirely different basis of form entry than that which applies to schools in urban areas? As the alternative can frequently be extensive bussing of children from these rural areas, will my hon. Friend give some consideration to altering the basis upon which closures of rural schools are agreed or disagreed?

Mr. Dunn: I am happy to take that on board. I remind my hon. Friends that our policy allows each set of proposals to be made on its merits. The policies of the Opposition parties would require closure, the elimination of any form of variety and a move to an 11 to 16 comprehensive system with tertiary colleges at their head. We draw back from any embrace of such a restrictive policy.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Does the Under-Secretary recognise that I gained the distinct impression, after a meeting with the parents of children of the South Brent primary school in Devon, that they would like to see that 110-year-old school closed and a new one provided? Will he ensure that the local authority gets adequate financial assistance to enable it to provide that new school?

Mr. Dunn: On these matters and on all other matters relating to the South Hams constituency, I advise the hon. Gentleman to see my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen).

Schools (Governing Bodies)

6. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish proposals for the transfer of greater financial responsibilities to the governing bodies of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I intend to bring forward legislation in the next Parliament to give all secondary and bigger primary schools control over their own budgets.

Mr. Stern: Has my right hon. Friend seen the excellent article by the chief master of King Edward's school, Birmingham, in *The Times* this morning, which pointed out that independent schools for many years have benefited from the sort of governing body that my right hon. Friend is now proposing for state schools? Does he agree that state schools have nothing to fear from a system that has benefited independent schools, while at the same time enabled them to retain the benefit of good local authority management?

Mr. Baker: Yes, Sir. Good schools have nothing to fear from delegation. In fact, delegation will give schools the power to get things done. The article in *The Times* this morning points the way forward. Where this is already happening in local authorities, head teachers and deputy heads are finding an enormous improvement in the quality of management of the school. I see no reason why, in the course of the next five years, every secondary school and all the large primary schools should not have control of their own budgets — and by that I mean the total amount of money.

Mr. Corbett: Should the Secretary of State be in a position to influence these matters after the coming election, will he assure the House that before he tinkers with budgetary control he will give a guarantee from the Dispatch Box that every school will have sufficient resources to carry out its responsibilities to our children?

Mr. Baker: I certainly give that assurance. The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that I have increased education expenditure this year by 19 per cent., which is the largest increase from one year to another. My hon. Friends might well have an early opportunity to put our education policy to a wider test.

Mr. Raison: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that at the same time as he provides greater financial decentralisation for schools, there will still be an important role for local education authorities to provide educational back-up to schools, particularly weak ones, in most parts of the country?

Mr. Baker: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. Local education authorities have the duty of managing the system of education at the local level. They have responsibilities and will continue to have them — for example, for the provision of the school premises, for the salaries of school staff, which delegation schemes have recognised, for special training, for in-service training and generally to help those schools that are not so well managed. I agree with that.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: What is the average level of discounts offered by educational suppliers to local education authorities for the bulk purchase of books and materials? What discussions has the right hon. Gentleman had with educational suppliers as to whether those discounts would be available to individual schools if they were responsible themselves for purchase and payment? Could he also tell us what discussions he has had about the extra pay that might be necessary for head teachers to carry out these extra responsibilities and what extra staff schools will need if they are to have this purchasing and budgetary responsibility?

Mr. Baker: I deplore the Opposition's negative approach to this proposal. There are 21 education authorities already experimenting along these lines, and where they have been implemented delegation schemes have invariably saved money at a local level. It would be up to the local headmaster, the deputy head and the governing body to make their own decisions about where they purchase, from whom they purchase and all the other matters concerning the running of the school.

Student Grants (Parental Contributions)

7. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance his Department offers as to the level of parental contributions expected from studens awarded maintenance grants.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): Parental contributions are assessed in accordance with the mandatory awards regulations. The scale of contributions is published early in the previous academic year and information about parental contributions is included in guidance which is published annually and is freely available.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. However, does he agree that the booklet of guidance to which he referred defines the grant as the sum needed

for the basic maintenance requirement of a student? Neither he nor our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have disputed the evidence given by officials to the Select Committee that the total grant is now insufficient to meet the needs of a student. Surely it is misleading to imply that if parents are assessed for a contribution, that contribution together with such grant as is paid would be sufficient to meet a student's needs. Is that not unfair, both to the student and to the parent? Will my hon. Friend ensure that the next issue of the booklet of guidance makes the position much clearer?

Mr. Walden: The Government have never claimed that the amount provided in grants is sufficient to meet all student needs. We have claimed on a number of occasions, quite rightly, that it must represent a balance between those needs and what the taxpayer can reasonably be called upon to pay for. My hon. Friend makes a fair point. The booklet is revised every year, and the wording is being re-examined.

Mr. Foulkes: As the Minister has admitted that the total level of grant is not sufficient to meet a student's needs, from where does a student with poor parents get the rest of the money?

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman is clearly not very familiar with the grant system——

Mr. Foulkes: Yes, I am.

Mr. Walden: —because pupils with poor parents are the pupils who have the highest level of grant. Whether or not pupils have poor parents, they are able to use their spare time in holidays to earn other income. If we believed that the present system was fully satisfactory we would not be carrying out a review, the purpose of which is to improve the position of all students.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Since my hon. Friend last answered questions in the House, has there been any greater clarity attained or confusion reduced among the so-called alliance parties on the matter of student loans?

Mr. Walden: I am now perfectly clear about the alliance's position. There are two policies. The first policy is that of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who is in favour of loans. The second policy is that of a more abstract entity that is known as the alliance, which claims to be against student loans. I should like to take this opportunity to commend the position of the right hon. Member for Devonport, who has a habit of reminding people of the importance of probity in politics. I am sure that the whole House will join me in commending the stand that he is taking on principle and not retracting the speech that he made on 14 February 1986 in favour of student loans.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

8. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to appoint members of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall appoint the committee this summer.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend accept that it was the divisions between the teacher unions and the outdated majority voting system that killed stone dead the Burnham committee on teachers' pay and conditions? Will he accept that there is an urgent need for a post-interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions to be set up as soon as possible and that it will have to be different from the previous Burnham committee, for example, in not having a majority voting system?

Mr. Baker: I have made it clear that the proposals that the Government have put forward are of an interim nature. We want to find a permanent machinery for the determination of teachers' pay and conditions. The proposals that I have seen, which are tentative so far, are in fact a revamped Burnham. The president of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, Mr. Frank Groarke said in his address to the conference at Easter that some unions use the Burnham committee as a recruiting tent rather than as a negotiating body. I am not prepared to go back to a revamped Burnham. I want to find a way forward to determine a permanent machinery for the determination of teachers' pay and conditions, because I can assure the House that neither I nor any holder of my office wants to be the determiner of teachers' pay and conditions.

Mr. Flannery: Does the right hon. Gentleman remember that, in response to a question from me last Thursday, the Prime Minister said that the Government would

"use the coming years to secure a new negotiating arrangement"?—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 790.]

The two major unions, which represent the vast majority of teachers, met because of that answer and were outraged at what the Prime Minister had said. I do not know whether the Prime Minister tells the right hon. Gentleman, but she must have received a joint letter from those two unions today, in which they say that if she will discuss—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should ask a question, not make a statement.

Mr. Flannery: I am asking a question Mr. Speaker. Does the right hon. Gentleman know that the Prime Minister has received a letter today in which those two unions make it clear that if she will agree to negotiate properly about next year's wage arrangements they will see her, but they want a promise first, and that is the only way in which our children can have an uninterrupted education?

Mr. Baker: I am aware that a letter has been sent to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister asking for a meeting between Mr Jarvis and Mr. Smithies and my right hon. Friend. I can see no reason why my right hon. Friend should see those two union leaders, because six weeks ago I invited them to see me and they declined to do so. Those are the only two union leaders who have not seen me. The other four union leaders have discussed with me the draft order before the House, which I understand might be debated quite soon. The other two leaders have refused to come in and make their views known. I have made it clear that I do not want to be the determiner of teachers' pay and conditions. All interested parties will find it difficult readily to agree on a permanent machinery, but there must be no going back to the form of negotiations under Burnham.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the interim committee, as its name suggests, is of temporary

duration and that its maximum life will be until 1990? Will he further confirm that the committee is designed to provide a breathing space between the demise of the Burnham committee and the introduction of new negotiating machinery? Will he repeat to the House his invitation to union leaders to meet him to discuss new machinery for negotiating teachers' pay and conditions? Will he confirm that two and a half years is a long time and that that period should be reduced?

Mr. Baker: There is no reason why the interim advisory committee should continue to operate until 1990. I wish to confirm that to the House. Later this year I want to meet the teachers unions, the local education authorities, churches and parent-teacher associations to try to find a permanent machinery. There are many models, ranging from a joint negotiating committee to a review body. Suggestions have been made that specific recognition should be given to the position of heads and deputy heads.

Mr. Spearing: The Secretary of State has constantly asserted the importance of an interim measure. Does he agree that consent is an important element in all educational processes? Why did he not set up a tribunal of mutally acceptable persons to determine the interim procedure for negotiations? Would that not have produced a better atmosphere and been the most responsible thing for him to do?

Mr. Baker: I did something rather better. I brought a Bill to the House, which was debated in this House, and in the House of Lords, without any guillotine or restriction on debate. All proposals were put forward during debates on that measure. As to the negotiating rights that are being claimed at the moment, one of the unions which is most strident in claiming those rights, the NAS/UWT, has for the past year sat on the sidelines and refused to take a constructive part in the negotiations, which were suspended, and organised disruptions while the negotiations were continuing.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend accept that there is a world of difference between the appalling image of the teaching profession that is put across by the Easter conferences, or some of them, and the reality of the many good and moderate teachers who are doing good work in classrooms in Norwich and up and down the country? Will my right hon. Friend describe the ways in which he will help to restore the confidence of those good teachers in the way ahead in these negotiations and talks?

Mr. Baker: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. At the Easter conferences we saw on our television screens a parade of militants. The majority of teachers are dedicated people. They are rightly held in high regard by the community. What we saw over the Easter weekend was a meeting of union activists. The disruption and chaos that are talked of should not be exaggerated. Before Easter, about 1 per cent. of schools were disrupted. Although that is small, it is unacceptable, because any disruption is unacceptable. Disruption is unjustified. Teachers will receive an increase of 16 per cent. this year and at the end of May will have substantial back-pay increases of several hundred pounds in their pay packets.

Mr. Radice: Is it not the case that in their letter to the Prime Minister today the teacher unions offered a way out of the present impasse and showed the way to peace in our schools? They made it clear that if the Government were prepared to agree to the restoration of negotiating rights for the 1988 pay round they would call off their action. Will the Secretary of State tell the House that either he or the Prime Minister will immediately arrange a meeting with the unions to discuss their constructive new initiative?

Mr. Baker: Six weeks ago I invited the leaders of the two unions to see me, but they decided not to come in. I saw the leaders of the other unions and they expressed their views about the new negotiating machinery. I reiterate that I am willing later this year to meet the teacher unions and the local education authorities, which, I understand, are sending me proposals, because I wish to reconfirm that in no way do I or the holder of my office wish to be the determineor of teachers' pay and conditions. We need a new permanent machinery, but so far the proposals that have been put to me are nothing more than a revamped Burnham.

Mr. Dykes: Contrary to the bluster and histrionics of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) and the teacher union conferences, will my right hon. Friend confirm that his moderate approach is the best way to obtain peace again in our schools, which will be supported by the vast majority of moderate and sensible teachers, provided that there is a real commitment to the restoration of negotiating rights as soon as possible?

Mr. Baker: I confirm that fewer than 1 per cent. of the profession are likely to disrupt schools this week. That is deplorable in view of the settlement that has been made. I confirm, as I said earlier, that we must find a more permanent machinery. That will be difficult in view of the different opinions of the various union leaders, but I shall persevere and try.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Secretary of State realise that, almost certainly, he has within his hands the power to end this disruption if he will stop mouthing words and take action—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashdown: With the permission of the public school Benches opposite——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I look after that.

Mr. Ashdown: —almost any action to begin to restore to teachers their rights to negotiate pay and conditions? Does he not realise that if he will not do that many in the country will draw the conclusion that he is cynically and deliberately playing into the hands of the militants for votes, scarificing peace in our schools for Tory advantage in the ballot box.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman could not have heard me. I have invited these two union leaders to come in and they have declined to do so. I want to find a permanent machinery as soon as possible, but the hon. Gentleman should not disguise from himself the great difficulty when the different unions have different interests and different views on what such machinery should be.

Mr. Spencer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the NUT in Leicestershire has called for the reinstatement of the teacher who was sent to prison for dangerous drug offences? Does that not display an attitude to teachers' conditions which no responsible parent would share?

Mr. Baker: I read a report of that and I find that request quite deplorable. Those who have been convicted of dealing in drugs should not in future be allowed to be in charge of children.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

9. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the progress of the GCSE examination.

Mr. Dunn: Last September some 600,000 pupils started courses which will lead to the first GCSE examinations in the summer of 1988. These courses have got off to a satisfactory start. The vast majority of teachers are committed to making a success of the new examination and the majority of lessons are deemed to be of an adequate quality and standard.

Mr. Pike: How can the Minister stand before the House and give such a complacent reply, which is so obviously at variance with the views of the majority of people in education, who believe that there has been insufficient preparation for the GCSE and that insufficient resources are available for the examination? How does he equate the £100 per student figure which the Secretary of State claims is the figure, with Lancashire county council's figure, which is nearer £30?

Mr. Dunn: Opposition Members ought to behave better than that. Continually to run down a major and successful change in the examination structure of this country simply will not do.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Budgen asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 April.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend find time to come to Wolverhampton and explain that strict control of immigration is essential to any improvement in race relations? Will she stress that the number of people coming to this country for settlement from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan has dropped from 34,000 in 1980 to 22,500 in 1986? Will she, further, allow the Opposition parties the opportunity to explain how their proposed repeal of the present system of immigration control, and its relaxation, is likely to improve race relations?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the numbers coming to this country through immigration have dropped. It is our intention to remain firm on immigration control. I agree with my hon. Friend that we should question the Opposition about their proposals to repeal the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981, which are the heart of our immigration control.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us whether she is actively opposed to any increase in the rate of VAT or any extension in its scope?

The Prime Minister: There is no way in which a Government of any political colour can say that they will never increase either value added tax or income tax. It was a Labour Government who extended the standard rate of VAT to petrol and snack foods. In November 1974 that Government put a new value added tax of 25 per cent. on petrol, and later extended the higher 25 per cent. rate to television sets, radios, electric domestic appliances, cameras, jewellery, boats and caravans. There is no way in which a responsible Government can say that there will be no increase whatsoever in any particular tax.

Mr. Kinnock: I did not ask the Prime Minister to make guesses. I asked her whether she is opposed to an increase in the rate of value added tax, yes or no? Is she opposed to an extension in the base of VAT? Does the Prime Minister accept that as she said in 1979 that the Government had no intention of raising VAT and then increased it by 87 per cent., the people of this country are rightly concerned when she dodges in the way that she does?

The Prime Minister: I call the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the entire record on value added tax.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is entitled to a hearing.

The Prime Minister: VAT was introduced at the standard rate of 10 per cent. The zero rate covered food, fuel, new housing, public transport, young children's clothing, and so on. On 1 April 1974 the Labour Government extended the base of VAT to petrol and snack foods. Just before the next election they cut the standard rate to 8 per cent. Following that election they raised the rate to 25 per cent. on petrol. Following that, they raised the rate to 25 per cent. on television sets, radios, electric domestic appliances, cameras, jewellery, boats and caravans.

The right hon. Gentleman is trying to distract attention from his party's colossal public expenditure, and it was the Labour Government who put up value added tax.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the bogus election propoganda—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is so much noise that I cannot hear whether the question is in order. I hope that it is.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is the Prime Minister aware of the bogus manifesto on the Conservative——

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but it is not the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is my right hon. Friend not aware, too, that the Labour party has put forward this manifesto as it has no policies of its own?

The Prime Minister: We are used to smears and scares. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: We are used to smears and scares from the party in opposition. May I give the House an example? During the last election campaign the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that if the Tories were allowed to win the election they would within five years put an end to the National Health Service—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I sense an electioneering atmosphere.

The Prime Minister: Since 1978 expenditure on the National Health Service has increased from £7·5 billion to nearly £20 billion this year, an increase of 31 per cent. after allowing for inflation. We have had the VAT scare before, when it has been alleged that we were going to put VAT on food. I gave an undertaking in 1984 that we would not put VAT on food. It was the party that is now in opposition that did that.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister agree that there can be no cover-up of treason and that the secret services cannot be allowed to operate as a state within a state? Would it not be healthier if, instead of spending time and effort trying to stuff various cats back into their bags, the Government were to make a frank statement to the House and set up a new inquiry into the operation of the secret services?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, I have no ministerial responsibility for events before this Government came to office. There is nothing that I can add to the statement made by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) in 1977, and Lord Wilson associated himself at that time with that statement. I believe that there was a Lib/Lab pact at the time, too.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if only half the promises of the Labour party were implemented there would be not only a massive increase in VAT but a massive increase in the standard rate of income tax?

The Prime Minister: I agree totally with my hon. Friend. The fact is that we are the party that reduces taxation, and the Opposition are the party that increases public expenditure and votes against the reduction of income tax.

Q2. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Prime Minister aware that when Lazard Brothers was advising Westland at the time of the takeover, a closely associated Swiss bank, Fils Dreyfus, took part in an illegal concert party to buy Westland shares? Is she further aware that that conspiracy to achieve her policy objectives looks even worse when one considers that her former Defence Secretary, Sir John Nott, is chairman of Lazards, and that one of her advisers, Mr. Gordon Reece, is a public relations adviser with that bank? In view of the nasty smell arising from that, does the Prime Minister agree that a Companies Act investigation should be set in motion urgently?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that a decision was taken not to do that because there was insufficient evidence at the appropriate time. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence, which, I suspect, he does not, perhaps he will give it to the proper authorities.

Q3. **Mrs. Ann Winterton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children holds its annual general meeting tomorrow? Will she join me in paying tribute to that organisation for the important and sensitive work that it undertakes on behalf of children? Furthermore, will she approach our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and give him every support and encouragement in introducing new ways to enable abused children to give evidence without added trauma?

The Prime Minister: I gladly join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the NSPCC, which many hon. Members on both sides of the House have supported for many years. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will issue a paper next month on the use of video and other evidence to enable children better to give evidence about what happened in their case.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to read yesterday's edition of *The Independent* and the serious allegations that are contained therein? Can she give the House an explanation of why the Government are trying to cover up those matters rather than trying to investigate them, as they should do? Does the Prime Minister not realise that——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must bear in mind the sub judice rule in this case.

Mr. Brown: I am trying carefully to do that, Mr. Speaker. Does the Prime Minister not realise that she is giving the country the impression that the Government regard themselves as the beneficiaries of past MI5 mistakes?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware, in spite of his attempt to get round it, that I have no ministerial responsibility for things that happened before I came to office. He will also be aware that there was a statement in the House that those events had been inquired into at the time, and that the previous Prime Minister, Lord Wilson associated himself at that time with the statement. He will be further aware that I have been the first to make statements on specific security matters when I have thought it proper to do so.

Q4. **Mr. Stern** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stern: Will my right hon. Friend reassure my constituents and the many other people who live around the Severn estuary by saying that, at least as far as she is concerned, the substantial risks that are posed to the environment, industry, ports and public health from the threat of the Severn barrage will be overridden only if there is a clear and overwhelming national need for such a barrage?

The Prime Minister: The studies of the barrage by the Severn Tidal Power Group are supported by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the Department of Energy. Those studies include environmental and regional issues and they will be discussed with all interested parties. Any future decision on the barrage will include consideration of all the relevant factors, including those two important factors.

Mr. Mason: The Prime Minister is undoubtedly aware of the turbulence and unease in the Province of Northern

Ireland due to the increased terrorist activity of the Provisional IRA. She will now also be aware of the conclusions of the security conference that was held in Stormont castle last night. What new measures does she intend to introduce to combat the increased activity of the terrorists in the Province?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would and probably did join yesterday in condemning the vile and cowardly acts that took place against Lord Justice and Lady Gibson and other members of the security forces. I have been in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and will continue to be in touch with him later this week. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will understand that we do not make statements about extra security measures.

State Security

3.31 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a brief statement to make, which may be helpful to the House.

It might be helpful if I expand on the ruling that I gave last night in response to a point of order from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about the extent to which issues connected with the publication of a book by Mr. Peter Wright are at present sub judice.

What may not now be discussed are the Attorney-General's decisions to bring proceedings against certain British newspapers and the action of the newspapers in publishing what they did. The content of the newspaper articles and the information they reveal are not sub judice, and hon. Members may continue to refer to those matters in debate and at Question Time.

In this context there is a further point to be made clear to the House. There are today no new developments by way of further details from Mr. Wright's book which would allow me to consider the exercise of my discretionary power to grant an emergency debate under Standing Order No. 20. I am bound by the requirement in that Standing Order as to the time by which applications must be made, and such an application was made yesterday. Hon. Members are familiar with the many opportunities open to them as individuals, as well as to the official Opposition and the other Opposition parties, to raise matters of their choice. We have an example of an Opposition Day today. It is important that hon. Members should pursue their wish to raise these matters with Ministers through the opportunities made available to them, and not seek to debate them with me through thinly disguised points of order when I am in no position to help.

3.32 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On a point of order arising from your statement, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday morning I tabled an early-day motion calling on the Prime Minister to stop hiding behind the statements of 1977 and to deal with the new revelations of Mr. Peter Wright. That motion was accepted in the Table Office and, accordingly, in the afternoon was released to the press.

At about 6 o'clock you were informed that the Attorney-General had taken new proceedings against *The Independent* and other newspapers and accordingly you ruled that my motion had become sub judice. I have absolutely no quarrel with that ruling. However, the motion is open for members of the public and, indeed, hon. Members to read in this morning's newspapers. The one place they cannot read it is on the Order Paper of the House of Commons. Is that not symptomatic of what is happening to us during all these discussions? There can be widespread discussion in editorials and articles in newspapers, but the one place we cannot adequately discuss the matter is here in the House.

Is it open to you, Mr. Speaker, as our Speaker, to put it to the Government that continued recourse to the courts is hindering us in one of our most fundamental duties, which is the protection of the very democracy that we are here to represent?

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman gave me notice that he would raise this matter. It is correct that he tabled a motion yesterday morning. At that time no action had been taken by the Law Officers regarding the newspaper article on the alleged events of 1977 relating to intelligence matters. The motion was in order, so was sent to the printers. However, later in the day action was announced by the Law Officers and, as the House knows, I ruled that that brought the sub judice rule into play. This meant that the right hon. Gentleman's motion could no longer go ahead. He was so informed, but I understand that it was not until today that the relevant message reached him. It will, of course, be open to the right hon. Gentleman to decide, after any court proceedings are concluded, whether he wishes to renew that motion in its original or some other form.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The whole House, naturally, will accept your ruling and indeed applaud the way in which you have been good enough to set out in the form of a statement the thoughts that guide you and the way in which you intend to conduct affairs.

Could I refer to part of that statement—notably the following short sentence:

> "What may not now be discussed are the Attorney-General's decisions to bring proceedings against certain British newspapers and the action of the newspapers in publishing what they did"

and address myself to what I believe to be a point of order which is fundamental to the conduct of order in this House.

First, while everyone can see the validity of what we consider to be the sub judice rule, because it ensures that not even proceedings in this House can influence the conduct of a case before the courts, when it is also the case that every newspaper in the world outside Britain, and indeed English language newspapers some editions of which are published in Britain, can to their heart's content refer to and examine the issues thrown up by the case in point, I wonder whether there is a case for a reappraisal of the traditions of the House in order to establish exactly where our boundaries of the sub judice rule are drawn in this age of very easy international communication, an age for which it is possible that—in some respects—our proceedings are not properly equipped.

Secondly, can I also put the point to you, Mr. Speaker, that it certainly is the case, as the right hon. Gentleman the leader of the Liberal party earlier said, that security is indivisible and that security and its requirements must command the general support of hon. Members on all sides of the House, elected as they are by the people of this country. There is, however, a profound question when an issue relates to security and has remained outside the public domain, and when an issue has received such breadth of coverage as to give the impression that it is the Government's political interests that are being safeguarded rather than the interests of security.

I raise these matters because they are fundamental to the relationship between this democratic House and a democratic and free press and the conduct of Government in our country. I would certainly be more than prepared to ask you to reflect further, and to have time to reflect, upon the issues raised in this particular case, since the last thing that any democrat could want is the creation of a precedent in this case that would effectively blanket out free expression in this country in the way that the Government so clearly want.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has raised a point of order with me and I must say to him and to the whole House that I am bound by the sub judice rule as it is operated in this House. If the House wishes to change the resolutions on sub judice, it is open to it to raise that matter with the Select Committee on Procedure and no doubt this important matter will receive fresh consideration. But it might be for the advantage of the House if I were to set out the sub judice rule as referred to in "Erskine May" on page 429. It is this:

"matters awaiting or under adjudication in all courts exercising a criminal jurisdiction . . . should not be referred to *(a)* in any motion (including a motion for leave to bring in a Bill), or *(b)* in debate, or *(c)* in any question to a Minister including a supplementary question:"

The case brought by the Attorney-General is of a criminal character and it was set in motion by the Attorney-General's application yesterday. I am bound by that rule.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am seeking to move Standing Order No. 20 today in a way that does not either breach the sub judice rule or breach the rule that new material is required for urgency to be attracted to the motion. I have listened very carefully to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but it relates to action by the Government against *The Independent*, and the general ruling about Standing Order No. 20 is that there should be new material. Accordingly, in the light of the Prime Minister's statement today that she would make no statement, I have sought to base my Standing Order No. 20 on that fact. The allegations that have been made and that are now in the public domain and noted in the pages of *Hansard*—I placed them there yesterday—are very serious in character——

Mr. Speaker: I can help the right hon. Gentleman. I have received from the right hon. Gentleman an application under Standing Order No. 20 which is in different terms from the application that he made yesterday. I am quite prepared to hear it, but is the right hon. Gentleman seeking to make it now? If he is, I will hear it.

Mr. Benn: I was seeking your advice as to whether you would hear it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have said I will.

Mr. Benn: I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the Prime Minister to answer a question about the new situation in relation to statements made by a former MI5 officer that he and others attempted to subvert an elected Government".

This application arises directly from the Prime Minister's refusal to make a statement about those allegations, which are now in the public domain and are quoted in yesterday's *Hansard*, about illegal acts by the security services, and, therefore, that information was not available yesterday. Secondly, this does not relate to the court case against—*[Interruption.]*the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A submission is being made to me. I cannot hear it—*[Interruption.]* I call for order on both sides of the House.

Mr. Benn: This does not relate to the court case. Indeed, the application goes to the root of the matter, that an MI5 officer has stated that he and other MI5 officers attempted to subvert Her Majesty's Government in 1974. Today the Prime Minister made a most remarkable statement that the Law Officers have no responsibility for enforcing the law where breaches occurred before they came into office. That is an unprecedented statement for a Prime Minister to make.

Since the allegations relate to members of all three parties, to my right hon. Friends who, along with me, sat in Government, to others, including the leader of the alliance party, who was then in that Government—and indeed some of the allegations relate to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who was the Leader of the Conservative Government—it is not a party but a constitutional matter. Given its constitutional importance and its obvious urgency, I submit that this is a matter that is uniquely appropriate for Standing Order No. 20 application and that it would be quite wrong to ask Members who raise this matter to seek a remedy through the use of Supply days.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I appeal to you most earnestly to use your discretion under our Standing Order, to allow a hearing of these grave allegations of subversion and sedition against an elected Government, which the Prime Minister herself has an obligation to undertake, arising from her office and the oath that she has taken as a Privy Councillor.

It is on that constitutional and House of Commons basis, Mr. Speaker, that I ask you, now—or later, if you want to give it further consideration—to afford this matter the urgency that it deserves and not to push it off to what may be the party interest of those parties that have access to Supply days.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the Prime Minister to answer a question about the new situation in relation to statements mady by a former MI5 officer that he and others attempted to subvert an elected Government".

I have listened with great attention to what the right hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not to challenge that ruling. I will take Mr. Campbell-Savours first.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In your ruling on the sub judice aspect of this matter, Mr. Speaker, you quoted from "Erskine May". I notice that you quoted the second half of the sentence. The first half of that sentence says:

"Subject to the discretion of the Chair".

Therefore, I put it to you that you have some discretion according to "Erskine May" as to whether these matters should be taken as sub judice in the House. It is on that basis that I raise my point of order.

We are informed that the sub judice ruling relates to a contempt by *The Independent* and others about proceedings brought by the Attorney-General against *The*

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

Observer and *The Guardian* which will be heard in the House of Lords in June. The proceedings will be before the Law Lords. The question is: do the proceedings in the Lords deserve the protection of sub judice? Could the Law Lords truly be influenced in their judgment by public debate on these matters? Of course, your ruling would preclude debate in this Chamber—*[Interruption.]*

This point of order is utterly legitimate and genuine. Hon. Gentlemen would do well to listen and learn.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that whereas there is good reason to believe that juries can be influenced and that, therefore, sub judice considerations should determine what Parliament can be free to debate, there is equally good reason to believe that judges and Law Lords could never be influenced by public debate. This case was made during the judgment in the Attorney-General v Times Newspapers Ltd in 1974. That judgment followed upon publication of an article by *The Sunday Times*. The noble Lord Reid said:

"But I must add to prevent misunderstanding that comment where a case is under appeal is a very different matter. For one thing it is scarcely possible to imagine a case where comment could influence judges in the Court of Appeal or noble and learned Lords in this House. And it would be wrong and contrary to existing practice to limit proper criticism of judgments already given but under appeal."

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Law Lords clearly do not need or require the protection of sub judice. It is their case that they would not be influenced by wider debate. Therefore, in considering these matters, if you made your judgment on the basis that the Law Lords need protection when they examine these matters in June or July, I put it to you that you might care to reconsider the matter because they themselves clearly do not subscribe to that view. If they are correct, it would not be necessary for you to apply the sub judice rule to our proceedings on these matters.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: May I deal one at a time on this matter? I read comment to this effect in a newspaper this morning so I have had an opportunity to look into the matter in great depth, which I have done. The sub judice rule is a self-denying ordinance made by the House to avoid the appearance of the Legislature seeking to influence the courts. Whether they would be influenced is a different matter. I must say to the House and to the hon. Gentleman that I have already explained the large area that remains open to debate, unaffected by the new case. I am not prepared to allow references to this case itself.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, West) *rose*——

Mr. Flannery *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will take Mr. Nelson first.

Mr. Nelson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of your statement and the points on Standing Orders which were made by Opposition Members. What the House has been treated to this afternoon is not just an abuse but a series of bogus and mischievous points from Opposition Members. Will you be good enough, Mr. Speaker, to advise them that what is wrong is not the rules and conventions of the House but the way in which they seek to table mischievous motions and raise mischievous, misleading and irresponsible points during Question Time? If they were to exercise a self-denying ordinance, no problem would arise.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interests of the Opposition day debate, in which there is a great demand to speak, I shall take all points of order at once.

Mr. Flannery: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order will be brief, and it springs from the fact that the answers given so far have caused a great deal of confusion among us. I want to try to get at the realities. I know that you are bound by what has happened but, having said that, surely it is obvious—at least, it is to me in probably a simplistic way—that contempt of the House is anything that brings the House into contempt. When the entire world can discuss a matter and the House cannot, I think that the rest of the world has a right to be contemptuous of the House. Therefore, I am seeking some way in which a cause of intense and massive public concern can be dealt with in the House, and I am concerned that outside the House millions of people will think, rightly or wrongly, that a device has been used to prevent the House discussing something which is of public concern.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have often said that you wish to protect the rights of Back-Bench Members. Many Back-Benchers may want to take part in the important debate on housing, which affects people, and not listen to bogus points of order about an issue which was dealt with fully by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) many years ago. We all know that the only person who has successfully destabilised the Labour party has been the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Sir. It is quite clear that the Government consider that considerations of confidentiality are more important than any examination of attempts to subvert a previous Administration. The Prime Minister is being somewhat disingenuous in saying that she can do nothing about examining these matters.

Is it not the case, however, that criminal events in the historic past can certainly be raised and enquired into by the Law Officers of any subsequent Government? And is it also not the case that if the Prime Minister really wanted to clear the air about this matter and look at the many misdemeanours of MI5 over the last few years she could establish a Royal Commission perfectly easily to examine all these issues, including the attempt to subvert a previous Government?

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not have been in order for the Opposition, any time until early this morning, to have altered the business? If the Opposition Front Bench was so concerned to have this matter debated publicly, its spokesmen could have done so within the confines of sub judice laws if they were skilful enough at debating and oratory in the House. The fact that the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen have failed to do shows clearly that they do not want the subject debated.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. What concerns me are your own words. It is quite right that "Erskine May" has the sub judice rule in it to dissuade the Administration from undue influence on the courts of this country. But there are two points here. First, "Erskine May" is not part of the Standing Orders of the House; it never has been and never will be. Secondly, although the sub judice rule is part of the resolutions of the House, I do not believe that it was ever intended to prevent the House from debating something which was more important than the role for which it was implemented.

In other words, why are we now prevented from debating a problem where someone has made serious allegations concerning the high crime of treason on the basis that a case has been brought under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, which bears a much lower penalty in a lower court? That is the difficulty in which the House finds itself, and it is the high crime of treason allegedly perpetrated by the security services to which the House wishes to address itself, but has been prevented from doing so by the actions of the Executive.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that in these circumstances hon. Members should try to help. If I may, I have got a helpful suggestion. The events that are referred to happened many years ago at the time of a Labour Government. They concerned a Labour Prime Minister. Some 10 years ago, another Labour Prime Minister made a full statement to the House saying what the circumstances were, and the whole matter was then cleared. It seems now that allegations are being made about the security services. The possibility is that the security services behaved improperly, but I would put it to you also, Mr. Speaker, that it is quite possible that the security services behaved properly and that the noble lord, Lord Wilson had some questions that should be answered. I would be grateful——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman said he was going to be helpful. I do not think that is very helpful.

Mr. Marlow: In fairness to the noble Lord, Mr. Speaker, can you advise the House as to whether there is any organisation or institution within the House which the noble Lord Wilson could address to clear his name?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister said that she had no responsibility because these events took place before she took office. That is not in dispute, yet in November 1979 the Prime Minister made a statement about Blunt. If she was willing to make a statement about Blunt and his treachery, and events that certainly occurred before she became Prime Minister, what possible excuse can there be for denying us a statement about the allegations that have been made? I put this point to you Mr. Speaker, because it is the essence of this debate.

We live in a parliamentary democracy. Everyone who comes here is apparently committed to the maintenance of our democracy. Allegations have been made, that not one or two but 30 officials in the security service during the 1970s were deeply involved in treachery and subversion. It may be that the allegations are just lies. It may be that Mr. Wright is not telling the truth, but, if Mr. Wright is telling the truth, if these allegations have a great deal of substance about them, how is it that the House of Commons can be denied the opportunity of any debate on the flimsy grounds that the events happened to occur before the Government took office? Are we going to be in a position that we cannot have a debate unless it is in Opposition time?

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is perfectly clear to every hon. Member that you are not responsible for the failure of the Prime Minister to answer perfectly legitimate — indeed, more than legitimate — questions of major importance affecting the government of this country. If I am right, and if I am interpreting correctly your ruling, delivered some half an hour ago, Mr. Speaker, what you did deny to the Prime Minister was the possibility of her failure to answer such questions on the ground that it would be a breach of the sub judice rule. You told us clearly that the content of the newspaper articles, the information that they reveal, are not sub judice and Members can question them and they can be the subject of debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this is an Opposition day. I am prepared to take all these points of order and deal with them together, but we should have regard to our colleagues. I cannot help hon. Members much further.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not clear that at least the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has little confidence in the veracity of Mr. Peter Wright's writings? No fewer than four months have now passed since the hon. Gentleman made his false and malicious accusations in the House under the cloak of parliamentary privilege, against Sir Stephen Hastings and myself, and he still has not found the guts to repeat them outside the House.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) would not be here but for his grandad. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether that was something I should or should not have heard.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

One of the features of the British constitution and the compilation of "Erskine May" is that, because we do not have a written constitution, the game has always been— to put it in crude terms — made up as we go along. I would remind you, Mr. Speaker — I am sure that you have looked at the evidence — that on numerous occasions when matters of sub judice have been brought before the House there have been somewhat different interpretations, according to the matter in question.

For instance, if you, Mr. Speaker, were to study the remarks made in 1971 in relation to the Industrial Relations Bill going through at that time and the sub judice aspect relating to Lord Donaldson, who was to be in charge of the industrial relations court, you would see that variations upon the sub judice ruling were made by the Chair.

[Mr. Skinner]

I would also remind you, Mr. Speaker, that that flexibility was apparent when the Clay Cross question was brought before the courts over a period of more than 12 months—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"].. Oh, yes. However, because the Clay Cross issue was about working men and women, somehow or other the House of Commons was able, over that period of more than 12 months, to discuss —albeit with the so-called sub judice ruling appertaining —all the matters affecting the Clay Cross issue.

During the miners' strike the same thing applied. During that year-long strike several injunctions were issued and matters were brought before the courts, but I would suggest that that did not restrain many people in this House from speaking on that issue at great length. You yourself, Mr. Speaker, understood that matter. Recently the same applied to the Liverpool surcharge. I believe that it is within the recollection of most people in the House that, even though that matter went before the High Court and the Law Lords, there was never any attempt at any time by you, Mr. Speaker, or even by Tory spokesmen and women, to suggest that nobody should talk about the Liverpool issue.

What I am saying is that this flexibility has allowed the House of Commons to discuss many subjects when it has wanted to. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that this whole issue should be looked at again. It is a matter of prime importance. That flexibility that has applied thoughout our constitution should apply in this case.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take four more hon. Members then we must move on.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware, Mr. Speaker, that Conservative Members would like to show solidarity with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)? It must be of some concern to the House, as a corporate entity, if the security services have been seeking to undermine and destabilise the Labour party or Her Majesty's Opposition. Bearing that in mind, and as the Leader of the Opposition is doing such a splendid job of destabilising and undermining the Labour party, should we not have an inquiry as to whether he is an MI5 agent?

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not a lawyer, so I cannot argue on constitutional points, but it does seem to me that what my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said has a great deal of validity. Certainly in my relatively short period in the House it seems to me that there is one set of rules that apply to the Labour side and another set that apply to the Tory side. Quite honestly, I think that that is extremely unfair. You, Mr. Speaker, should accept a valid argument.

For a period of a year there were members of my constituency—miners—who were in front of the courts for no crime—they were acquitted. However, time after time, day after day, Ministers and Tory Members condemned them and discussed the issues in the House when those men were in front of the courts. If there is one rule for the Conservatives what about a rule for us? I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look very closely at what happened during the miners' strike. Then you must accept the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You, Mr. Speaker, have reminded us that you are bound by the rules and Standing Orders of the House in these matters. However, over a number of years, many of us have heard the Opposition raise many points of order concerning the sub judice rule, which they claim has prevented them from debating important matters before the House. If those points of order were anything other than bogus one would have expected requests to have been made to amend the Standing Orders of the House, to produce a rule that would be more amenable to what the House regards as important.

Can you tell us, Mr. Speaker, whether you have received any requests from the Opposition for a review of our Standing Orders on the question of sub judice? Could you also, Mr. Speaker, cast some important light on the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when she said that these matters arose before she assumed responsibility? What is the role of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) in these matters? Is his consent required for any review of the papers during his Prime Ministership? Has he given such consent?

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said that I would only take four more points of order, but I will take the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire.

Mr. Forth: I am the fourth. On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Following the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) the Opposition, if they wish to pursue this, are not only free, but would be advised to take the matter up initially with the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) the Father of the House. They might be well advised to do so in the confidential atmosphere of the Tea Room, where they may well find that they will obtain much more information and advice.

If you, Mr. Speaker, give the Opposition that advice, they can then go to another place in this building and seek out another player in this drama, Lord Wilson, who played a major part. The Opposition can then satisfy themselves as to the factual background of this matter before coming to the House and trying your patience and trying as they have, to abuse order in the House.

Mr. Speaker: I think that we must now move on. I believe that I can deal with all these matters.

First of all, I am bound by the rules of the House. the sub judice rule is a resolution of the House and I have no——

Mr.. Campbell-Savours: You have discretion.

Mr. Speaker: I have no discretion other than the one I have already mentioned. May I say to the House, and to those who say that there are those outside who will not understand, that I am in no sense seeking to stifle this discussion. That is not the Chair's function. The House has the remedy in its hands. In my statement earlier this afternoon I said that there are many opportunities for hon. Members to raise this issue and remain in order. There was an opportunity to do so today and there are other opportunities — private Members' motions, or in Opposition time, if that arises, or at Question Time—within my ruling. I am in no sense seeking to stifle this debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We want a Minister at the Box to answer the questions.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a matter for the Government. The questions that have been raised with me are matters of order and I can rule only on matters of order.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I doubt whether I shall ever address the House again; but may I just say that the discussion that I have heard has brought the House into such disrepute that, after 17 years as a Member, I trust that your successor, Mr. Speaker, never has to rule that we are not able to discuss a matter of such importance in such circumstances.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have specifically not ruled that we may not discuss this matter. I have ruled on how it may be discussed.

Pension Trusts

4.9 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to define the duties of trustees of occupational pension schemes; to require the Occupational Pensions Board to issue guidelines for the conduct of such trustees; to give further protection to the rights of early leavers; to require employers to make minimum contributions for pension provision as deferred remuneration; and for related purposes.

I dealt with these points in an Adjournment debate on 19 March, but as is the practice, unfortunately, with such debates, the conclusions were somewhat nebulous. However, we have a matter here which is of sufficient importance to justify our proceeding by way of legislation.

The reasons why I consider that such a Bill is particularly needed now may be summarised as follows: the changes in the tax treatment of pension funds in last year's Budget and in this year's Budget, particularly the tax treatment of apparent surpluses; the reforms in the law which offer great new opportunities for employees and employers to accumulate capital to provide for retirement in different ways; the spate of recent takeovers and company amalgamations, in which pension funds are often conspicuously involved; and the very rapid growth in the value of the assets of the funds held in trust, coupled with the fall in current inflation and inflationary expectations. All those things are creating a new context for pension fund managers or, as I prefer to call them, pension fund trustees.

Obviously, in seeking to introduce a Bill on this subject, I am aiming particularly at the trustees of final salary schemes, because in the case of money-purchase schemes the obligations of the trustees are much simpler and there is not so much controversy about them. I have often wondered why the term "defined benefit" schemes is used by professionals in describing final salary schemes, because it seems to me that the benefits are not precisely defined either as at the date of retirement or after the retirement of the beneficiaries. I also dislike the final salary principle, because the final salary schemes tend to favour long stayers and high flyers at the expense of the early leavers and the humbler members. Pension funds should treat all the beneficiaries with equal fairness.

I mentioned the treatment of the beneficiaries at the date of retirement or after retirement. I should like to draw the attention of the House to a parliamentary answer that I received yesterday from the Department of Health and Social Security. Unfortunately, the figures are available only up to 1983, but I understand that of about 2,000 schemes only about 2 per cent. had then decided fully to uprate the benefits that they were paying to people who were already in retirement in accordance with the retail prices index. That is to say, while the funds had been rising at least in line with inflation—and in some cases rising very much more rapidly than inflation—the trustees did not think it necessary to give justice to the beneficiaries already in retirement.

As I said, those were the figures available up to 1983. Even if I have misinterpreted them, I think that we can certainly say that the great majority of occupational pension schemes in the private sector — but not, of course, in the public sector, where this aspect is totally protected—have not looked after those in retirement so

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

as to maintain their purchasing power in accordance with the change in the value of money. This is one of the things that the House ought to bring home to the trustees—that it is indeed their responsibility.

Just now we are in the process of considering the return to the sponsoring employers of sometimes very substantial funds which are deemed to be in surplus in the hands of occupational pension fund trustees. I consider that the trustees are justified in returning money to the sponsoring employers only when all the other possible options have been exhausted. At present that is certainly by no means clear to the trustees of these schemes.

My second suggestion is that we should require the Occupational Pensions Board to issue guidelines about the conduct of such trustees. It should be clear to the trustees that they are acting, not for the sponsoring employers, but for the beneficiaries. That is where their duties lie, just as if they were trustees of any other settlement. The duties of trustees should be clearly set out in writing, if only to enable the trustees to resist improper pressures from sponsoring employers or other interested parties.

Thirdly, I suggest that we should give further protection to the rights of early leavers. This is a very long-standing campaign of mine. I made my maiden speech on the subject nearly 20 years ago. It is a disgrace to the private sector occupational pensions movement—and certainly a serious criticism—that it has not adopted this practice long ago in the interests of elementary justice and good employment practice.

This is, of course, a very technical matter, but if hon. Members are interested I believe that a satisfactory recommendation was made in the amendment that I proposed to the Finance Bill under new clause 34 on 17 July last year. I shall not weary the House by reading again the suggestion that I made at that time, except to say that it was drawn up with the help of some of the most prominent people in the actuarial profession.

Next, I should like to require employers to make minimum contributions for pension provision as deferred remuneration. That is because it needs to be made clear that a pension fund set up in the private sector is not some kind of frill, or a special privilege, or bonus for employees, but that a pension is a matter of entitlement resulting from their service in the course of their careers. Ideally, I should like employers' contributions to be specified at at least 10 per cent. Anything lower than that is unlikely to produce the sort of pension that most people would regard as reasonable continuity of spending power into retirement after a full career of service.

I understand that in the public sector the cost of providing the two-thirds schemes is between 17·5 and 20 per cent. on top of current remuneration. Of course, one cannot put this burden on employers in the private sector until we have had the wholesale reform of national insurance, which obviously has to come very soon. In the meantime, the employers' contribution to the occupational pension scheme should be recognised as deferred pay. Making this payment is a practice that cannot be discontinued or adjusted from time to time simply because of the size of the fund that has accumulated from previous years, or the chances of the way in which the trustees have invested the fund. The employers' contribution should be at a rate determined as part of the contract of employment and should be quite unrelated to the amount of the fund that has accumulated at any particular time.

I have asked the leave of the House to add certain measures as related purposes in the conclusion of my Bill. I should like to mention three. We should increase the margin that it is permissible for trustees to hold on top of their currently foreseeable obligations. I suggest that that margin should be raised to 10 per cent. from the current 5 per cent. I remember from our discussions in Standing Committee when this proposal was introduced that it was said that the 5 per cent. margin could be interpreted on a quite liberal basis. Nevertheless, the exceptional wealth of some of the occupational pension funds at the present time may be transitional and I feel it is therefore unfair to oblige them to run down their funds when more difficult times may lie ahead.

We should make private sector occupational pension schemes fully unisex, and should do that by the adoption of suitable provisions in respect of the entitlement of surviving spouses. The House had an interesting debate on this subject yesterday when we considered the pension provisions for the widow of one of our former Speakers. The public consensus is that pension schemes should give strictly unisex treatment. There is no reason why that should not be possible.

Finally, I should like to specify a limit to self-investment by the trustees of occupational pension schemes to a maximum of 1 per cent. in the sponsoring employer's shares. That is one of the recommendations that I included in the Bill that I introduced by leave of the House as long ago as 1969. I think that it is also one of the recommendations which the House would have found helpful if it had adopted it at that time. Unusually, in view of the great technicality of this subject, I have not invited any other hon. Member to join me in preparing and presenting the Bill. I should like, however, to take this opportunity to say that I believe my Bill is supported by many right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams.

Pension Trusts

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams accordingly presented a Bill to define the duties of trustees of occupational pension schemes; to require the Occupational Pensions Board to issue guidelines for the conduct of such trustees; to give further protection to the rights of early leavers; to require employers to make minimum contributions for pension provision as deferred remuneration; and for related purposes. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 May and to be printed. [Bill 142.]

Opposition Day

[12TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Housing

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Front Bench Spokesman I advise the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.20 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I beg to move,

That this House believes that every household should be able to occupy a dwelling of the size, type, standard and location suitable to its needs, free from nuisance, harassment, racial discrimination or arbitrary eviction, and should have a free choice of tenure, freehold, leasehold or other, without prejudicing its mobility or its right to financial aid, equality under the law, or status; and strongly condemns Her Majesty's Government for its failure to provide for the housing needs of the nation over the past eight years.

I thought you were about to ask for brief speeches, Mr. Speaker, and I was about to say that I have not the slightest intention of curtailing my remarks, notwithstanding that we have lost a little time. I understand the needs and wishes of hon. Members, but this debate is important. Hon. Members on the Back Benches and the Front Benches ought to be entitled to make speeches on this vital issue of "Housing: A major cause for concern".

My first protest is that last Thursday, when the Leader of the House read out the title of the debate as "Housing: A major cause for concern", that was the title the Opposition wanted. We resent deeply the archaic, juvenile, stupid, bureaucratic rules of this House that prevent the Opposition from having their own title on their own motion. I understand that that is something we have to live with, but we deeply resent the fact that we are not allowed to have our own titles on our own motions. I say that to the Minister because I understand the point raised in the Government's amendment.

The first part of the motion is:

"That this House believes that every household should be able to occupy a dwelling of the size, type, standard and location suitable to its needs, free from nuisance, harassment, racial discrimination or arbitrary eviction, and should have a free choice of tenure, freehold, leasehold or other, without prejudicing its mobility or its right to financial aid, equality under the law, or status".

So far in the motion I can take with me the Association of County Councils which, if one talks about power structures, I understand is hung; the Association of District Councils, which is under Conservative control; the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, which is under Labour control; the Association of Municipal Engineers; CHAR, which is the Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless; the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; the Housing Centre Trust; the Institute of Housing; the Institution of Environmental Health Officers; the National Federation of Housing Associations; the National House-Building Council; the National Housing and Town Planning Council; the Royal Institute of British Architects; the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors; the Royal Town Planning Institute; and Shelter. These organisations, which are clearly not Labour party organisations, subscribe to every word of that part of the motion I have just read out. Together they form the National Housing Forum which has housing representatives from across the political and professional spectrum.

I will put the aims of the National Housing Forum on the record because I think they are important. Its aims are to make the case for increased public awareness of our growing housing difficulties, to secure more widespread support by politicians of all parties for an increased emphasis on housing, and to ensure that greater human and financial resources are committed to ending the misery brought about by bad conditions and housing shortages. On behalf of the Labour party I endorse those aims and I invite the Minister to do the same.

In a short debate of three hours or thereabouts, I do not propose to recite another description of the problems that have been catalogued in a mountain of reports sent to hon. Members in recent years. We should look at the causes, resources and possible prescriptions. A major cause for concern is the lack of a national strategic housing policy. New initiatives, welcome as many of them are, operate only at the margin of the problem.

We have to recognise that housing has a significant impact upon the health of people and their families. We must accept that, without decent housing, the social ills of family break-up, vandalism and crime, racial prejudice and discrimination, loneliness, and physical and mental illness are all multiplied and magnified. We have to accept that it is a major economic and social responsibility of each generation to build, repair, maintain and improve the nation's homes so that unfair burdens are not passed from one generation to another. That leaves aside the creation of jobs and the development of skills and technologies involved in the task.

If one accepts those self-evident truths, it should greatly concern us that in many areas people face problems of severe housing shortage and unsatisfactory housing conditions. Homelessness is on the increase. The number of homes for rent has declined by Government fiat in the past few years. The quality of the stock, notwithstanding bursts of improvement, has declined so that every home must now last more than 1,000 years. That is a quite ludicrous proposition.

In absolute terms, the largest number of homes in serious disrepair are owner-occupied, many of them occupied by elderly people. The highest percentage of housing that is either unfit or in serious disrepair—31 per cent.—is in the private rented sector. Frankly, with its record, that is hardly surprising. We are all aware that not only is around £23 billion required to bring public sector council housing stock up to scratch, but the Audit Commission tells us that we fall behind on repairs by £900 million per year. It gets worse each year, notwithstanding the considerable sums that are spent.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: I do not propose to give way. I want to speak on behalf of my hon. Friends without interruption. I do not want to crowd out any Back Bencher because of the time that has just been wasted on the points of order.

Those are some of the factors that have led to the obscenity, to take one example, of the bed-and-breakfast hostels and hotels. Does it make sense for taxpayers to fork out £300 million to keep 160,000 families in bed-and-breakfast hostels and hotels? Examples of this kind of

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waste are known by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I can cite the example of the Harrow millionaire mentioned in the *Sunday Mirror* who rakes in nearly £7,000 per week for cockroach-infested hotel rooms in London or the Edinburgh landlord who pulls in £45 per week for each of 20 beds and slices of bread in a house, as shown in a recent Channel 4 series on young homeless. These examples can be found up and down the country; I have given one from London and one from Edinburgh.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: I have already said that I do not propose to give way.

The Government do not appear interested in how the money is spent. Both the Department of the Environment and the Department of Health and Social Security refuse to check the quality of rooms or breakfasts, or to answer parliamentary questions about the waste and abuse in hon. Members' constituencies. The payment of two housing benefits for one bedsit is not unknown in the murky underworld created by housing shortages.

The money involved is a vital public resource that is simply going to waste. Taxpayers and ratepayers cannot understand why this is allowed to happen. I will not accept that there are administrative or financial barriers that prevent this money from being switched to the Housing Corporation and local authorities, thus putting these landlords out of business. None of these landlords would be approved by Parliament under the assured tenancy provisions. They feed off the homeless and the taxpayer. We can stop them, and we should stop them.

I make no apology for saying that my hon. Friends and I consider it our duty to put those characters out of business. They should not be allowed to exploit the homeless and the financial allowances granted to them by the taxpayer any longer than we can avoid.

Although housing demands extra resources, we have to be extremely vigorous about the use of existing resources. No one must ever advance the case for extra resources without pointing out that we have to be careful how the money is to be spent. By way of example, I quote the two modest reports from the Audit Commission last year, on management and repairs in the public sector. They showed clearly how improvements could be made. While not everyone may agree with every proposal, it is to the credit of many local authorities that they are seeking to learn from and implement the recommendations in these reports. It is extremely irritating to tenants everywhere that, when so much needs to be done and when we know that we are falling behind in our repairs and our remodernisation programme, five or six — one of my hon. Friends quoted more — inspectors are looking at a problem but nobody ever does the job.

I invite Ministers to go to one authority, Dudley. I do not know whether the Minister has been there. It is close to my area, and I have been there a couple of times in the past few years. He would then see how real, effective decentralisation and the new rapid multi-skill repair squads are giving greater satisfaction to the tenants. They are cutting the frustration and it is clear that they are saving nine by doing a stitch in time. That is an example that many other local authorities should follow. I pay tribute to what is happening in Dudley. A large proportion of landlords have taken it to heart to try to implement better procedures to give satisfaction to tenants and, in my experience, the tenants greatly welcome that.

Although we require a national commitment, we do not want a national "same everywhere" solution to the housing problem, because there is not one. Anybody who stands up and says there is, is doing a disservice to the homeless. There has to be balance and variety in housing, or there is no choice.

Just before I came to the House for Prime Minister's Question Time I was on the telephone to one of my constituents. She is in serious trouble and cannot sell her home. It has been on the market for over 12 months. It is one of those refurbished maisonettes that we find in many of our cities. My constituent explained that six of her neighbours have been unable to sell their properties and have handed the keys in to the building society and gone elsewhere. They found it impossible. They did not wish to buy at the time, or to buy the property that they did, but they did not foresee the massive problems they have had in selling the property now that they want to move. Clearly, they had no choice. There must be genuine choice in housing. I have put that to the Minister throughout my remarks and over the past couple of years and my hon. Friends have also made the point. People should not be forced to rent or to buy because of particular circumstances of Government policy. That has been the case in many areas in the past few years.

The national shortage of rented housing could be met by large-scale construction of single tenure council estates, using factory methods of building, coupled with lots of tower blocks and economies of scale. That would be a disaster and show we have learned nothing from the past. The Labour party rejects that approach. It was a system foisted upon local councils first by the post-war Conservative Government and later by Labour Governments. Thousands, if not millions, of today's tenants are, as a consequence, trapped in defective housing, which is badly planned and, for many of the local authorities, impossible to maintain. Those homes are less than 30 years old. The debt charges have not yet been paid on those homes. It would be impossible to correct many of them structurally, so they will have to come down. That has to be taken on board as a national policy and not left to individual local authorities because they simply cannot cope with the size of the financial commitment that would be involved.

Some councils could and should build new family housing for rent, without any subsidy whatsoever. It is actually cheaper than subsidising the private sector. The chairman of housing in Gateshead made that clear to the Minister recently. Other local authorities want partnership with financial institutions and instead of putting barriers in their way the Government should positively encourage that.

I know that the Minister made an announcement in February and that since then there has been some legislation. However, the institutions are not queueing up to say that that is the greatest thing since sliced bread or that it allows them to go into partnership. The bureaucratic rules that have been imposed by the Civil Service at the behest of Ministers, or the other way round, will not allow the scheme to operate in the way that it should and in the way that we would wish.

Some local authorities are just plain old-fashioned. They just want to use the money they have obtained from

selling homes and land to replace and build homes for the elderly and refurbish their existing stock. However, the money is locked in the bank. Nobody can make a case, on either side of the House, for such a crazy policy. Nobody believes that it makes any sense that that money is not available to put back into housing, whether in refurbishment or new build. It does not make any sense.

In the same way as the public sector, in its traditional form, is not the only way forward, I invite the Minister to confirm—this is important—that he does not see the only way forward as being the private sector. He either agrees with balance, variety and choice or he does not. One cannot have it both ways. One cannot suggest that there is a single solution by saying that there will be only the private sector and that everything will be done to stamp out any aspect of the public sector. I do not make that claim from my side of the argument and I do not think that the Minister should continue to make it from his side.

I invite the Minister to study the plans by COPEC, the second largest landlord in Birmingham, to build and rent family housing using institutional funding such as British workers' pension funds. That is better put into British homes than American hotels and fancy paintings. It uses institutional funding with the required rate of return and with rents set at fair rent levels.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: No.

That imaginative scheme has been organised to build and rent family housing using institutional funding with the required rate of return, and rents set at no higher than fair rent level. The concept is simple. I cannot go into all the details, but it is based on the idea that the voluntary sector exists to provide homes to rent and not necessarily to build up a property portfolio. It rests on some equity surrender or withdrawal at some point during the period of the loan to ensure the required rate of return to the building society or pension fund. With a rolling programme of development and acquisition over the loan period, normal voids occur at no less than three times the rate required for the equity withdrawal. Therefore, there is no problem in respect of security of tenure. As ever, it was made in Birmingham. It is a good idea and the imaginative scheme of COPEC deserves all our support. I certainly hope that the Minister will look at the scheme. I know that the Housing Corporation supports it and that it finds favour with the institutions as well.

Earlier this year I wrote to the Minister, following the claim in the public expenditure White Paper that there is generally speaking an adequate supply of housing overall in Britain. I pointed out, using everybody else's figures, not Labour party figures, that we appear to be about 1 million homes short rather than having 500,000 too many. I wrote to the Minister and told him that I had not taken account of the high rise blocks or the defective housing, much of which will have to be demolished or replaced, and I did not take account of the view of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, which is that we need about 2·5 per cent.—nearly 500,000 homes—empty at any one time to facilitate mobility. The professional view is that without that, the system will not work.

After disputing the figures, which, incidentally, were repeated by the National Housing Forum in its note to party political leaders at the end of March, the Minister went on to remind me that most people want to own their own home. I wrote to the Minister about total numbers of homes for people, irrespective of whether they are owned or rented. Unfortunately, the Minister picked up only one aspect. What he asserts is correct for the majority of people, but people want to decide for themselves when they want to buy.

We now know of people being forced into purchases prematurely. The building societies are worried about that. The Minister's attention has been drawn by the building societies to the fact that we have the largest sector of young home owners anywhere in the advanced western world. They see some pluses in that but they also see some minuses. One has only to look at the high repossession rate, especially among the younger sector of the population. If there is a shortage, there is no choice. It is plain and simple.

The Nationwide building society has said that prices for first-time buyers are outstripping rises in pay and that people are being forced to buy smaller and smaller homes. Hon. Members must know from their constituents that those homes are not easy to sell. A show house which is empty or has specially built furniture designed to create the illusion of more space, can look great. Those houses might be all right for Tom Thumb people, but not for ordinary people. [An hon. Member: "Shortism."] I plead guilty to shortism. Builders are being forced to build smaller dwellings.

People go to their Members of Parliament or local councillors and say: "Look, I bought this home in good faith. Now I can't sell it. What are you going to do about it?" We have to explain that this is the result of free market housing and that this Government over the past eight years have deliberately created a shortage of rental housing. Thousands of people are trapped in homes that they are finding it extremely difficult to dispose of.

Only yesterday, the south-east director of Wimpey claimed that, due to the demand on new housing estates, he was tickling up the price of new houses, in some cases daily. My constituents have told me that they have difficulty keeping up with price rises every week, but prices being tickled up daily is news to me. The director of Wimpey was reported in the *London Daily News* as having said that that is the case. House price inflation in the south-east on this scale is in nobody's interests. It is not in the interests of owners or buyers, especially first-time buyers.

I find it difficult to understand why some Ministers have said that some people want to remain tenants. Some people remain tenants because they cannot afford to buy a home, but some people genuinely want to remain tenants. They resent being forced into what they consider to be not very good quality housing; they would prefer to remain tenants. Tenants cannot see why rent structures are organised so that they have no share in the capital growth of the property, and they end up buying the homes for the landlords. That is the present rent structure in the public and private sectors.

This issue ought to be tackled because many good things would come from such changes, such as flexible leases. That is not the only scheme which could be implemented. Tenants must feel that the rent they pay is not wasted money. Tenants often say, "I have bought this house two or three times over with my rent," but neither the property nor the capital growth accrues to them. People do not necessarily want to buy houses, but they do

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not want to feel that the rent is wasted money. Some changes which could improve the tenants' satisfaction are to increase the stock of rented housing and to provide better maintenance and above all, to assist in breaking the polarisation between tenants and owners, which has concerned hon. Members and our late colleague, Tony Crosland, in the 1977 housing policy review. We have never taken on board that concern as seriously as he intended.

Some authorities, Labour and Conservative, have experimented, but at the margin of the present law. Parliament should assist by introducing these changes. No one course of action will solve the problem; many ideas could be implemented to give new rights to tenants and to convince them that money paid in rent is not money down the drain.

We all know, because of the debates on pensions and the aged—we have just had a ten-minute Bill relating to the Occupational Pensions Board — that the aged population is changing and will do so in the first part of the next century, which will lead to a much higher proportion of elderly people. We have to adjust our housing policy to take account of this. A Conservative Member has said to me, "It is all these divorces causing more homeless and household formation growth," but no one says that we should change the law and stop people divorcing, or force people to live together as they used to have to do.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: That is a red herring.

Mr. Rooker: It is not a red herring; it is dragged out by hon. Members from time to time. Changes in one aspect of policy must take account of changes in other aspects of policy. This applies to the age profile of the population. The elderly are not a single group who can be dealt with by a single solution. We know from reports produced in the past few years, particularly the inquiry into British housing, that there is an urgent and massive demand for sheltered housing for the elderly, for those who both rent and buy, at realistic figures, not at the figures which are deliberately inflated by property developers.

Mixed investment could come about with a national policy—not a national direction—to take account of the change in population age. Mixed public and private investment would lead to the release of a substantial number of dwellings for renting and buying by families and the younger generation, thereby enabling the nation to make much better use of its existing housing stock. We all know of the grossly inefficient use of our existing housing stock.

Nobody would advocate, as some councils have come close to doing, forcibly removing people due to under-occupation. I say "forcibly" because there are no alternatives; the choice is not there. A national policy could create new investment. This country is awash with money — I do not accept that we do not have the money.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: I will not give way. I am coming to a conclusion. *[Interruption.]* It is no good hon. Members yelling at me from a sedentary position. I have clearly said that I will not give way again. I have always freely given way in other housing debates—perhaps too often—but, because of what happened earlier, I do not propose to give way. We have nothing to be defensive about. If hon. Members have listened to me, they would appreciate that that is the case.

As the National Housing Forum has made clear, we have never had answers to the three main questions posed by Mr. Crosland in 1977. Those questions are: how much housing is needed and how could the available resources best be used to get it; how much would people pay for their housing; and what are the wider social implications of how housing is organised? The National Housing Forum is right to remind us of the need for answers, because in finding them we might help our homeless fellow citizens and those who are badly housed. If we do not address the matter as a major cause for national concern, with a national assessment of what is required, most of the post-war gains in housing standards, the physical condition and reduction in shortages, will be thrown away by this generation. We are not prepared to see that happen. We are prepared to address the wider issue of housing policy. The Government, after eight years in office, have yet to show the concern for the young. I invite the Minister to rubbish the motion, if he can.

4.48 pm

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'that as many households as possible should have the opportunity to benefit from owning their own home and that for those who are unable to buy or who do not wish to do so there should be a real choice of rented housing both in terms of type and location of dwelling and of landlord; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government for pursuing policies which give people not only the housing they need, but also the housing they want.'.

Apart from a purple patch at the beginning and a deep purple patch in the last sentences, that was an extremely interesting speech, with many good points. There is considerable agreement about many of those points.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Patronising.

Mr. Patten: It is not patronising at all. It is right that when one agrees with someone, one should say so. I would be delighted if I could ever say that I agreed with the hon. Member.

I welcome many of the things that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, but I do not think that he can have read our amendment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) said on more than one occasion, the hon. Gentleman need only look at the amendment to see that the Government are striving for just the balanced approach that he wants, although we may not agree on matters of detail. It is a pity that he has not done so.

I welcome the opportunity for another debate on housing. It is certainly right that housing should be high on the national agenda and I am delighted to see that it is. One reason for that is that over the past eight years the Government have helped to put it there. We have had some remarkable achievements in housing, particularly in owner-occupation, in the past, and, with the important reforms that we are proposing in the public and private rented sector, will have more in the future.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman, to whom I have given way on more occasions than I have had hot dinners, will forgive me, I intend to pursue the same policy towards Opposition Members as the hon. Member for Perry Barr pursued towards my hon. Friends.

The motion talks of housing needs. There are legitimate housing needs, which we recognise, but I am concerned about a number of other so-called housing needs. First, I am concerned about claims that there is a need for more council and rented housing when 113,000 council houses and flats are standing empty. I am concerned about claims that there is a need for more money for repairs and maintenance of council stock when 20 authorities in England have over £100 million of rent owing to them. That is exactly the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) attempted to raise earlier.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I am just getting going. I shall give way later.

Thirdly, I am concerned that the Opposition still see a need for more council housing when all that that would do is to increase the grip of the local authority monopoly on rented housing. The hon. Member for Perry Barr is feeling his way towards more mixed solutions, and I welcome that, but, alas, that approach is not shared by many of his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Fourthly, I am deeply concerned that Britain has allowed a situation to emerge where 540,000 privately owned flats and houses are empty which could be used to house people in need. If only Opposition parties would join us in searching for solutions to that issue we would be some way down the road to cracking the housing problem.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Leicester, contrary to what has been said, there are nearly 1,000 empty council houses? Is he further aware that about 24,000 council houses have not been repaired? Is it not a double standard for the Labour party to say that there is a great housing problem when it is the Labour-controlled authorities which do not give a damn about what is happening to council tenants in their areas?

Mr. Patten: Just as the hon. Member for Perry Barr was right to draw attention to the generally good housing record of a Labour authority called Dudley, so it is right for my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) to bring home to the House Leicester's lamentable housing record. It is one of the worst housing authorities in the country.

The essence of the Government's housing policy, as it has been developed in recent years and will be developed further, is choice. We have encouraged home ownership for the majority who want it and now we want to provide, for the first time in decades, a real choice in rented housing for these people whose needs are not met by home ownership, who cannot afford it, or who simply do not want it. That is what we intend to do. That is exactly what the hon. Member for Perry Barr asked for. However, we do not intend to do that just by council housing; nor do we intend to do it just by mixed developments with housing associations, important though both those areas are. We intend to move much further.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr is halfway to the position that we intend to reach. He is in the position now that the Labour party was in in 1979 over the right to buy and owner-occupation. One can see how much things have changed when owner-occupation is lauded and praised in Labour party political broadcasts, and I welcome that. The landscape of housing in Britain has changed over owner-occupation in the past eight years and we shall see the same change in rented housing in the immediate future.

Choice is no empty slogan. Those who can choose their housing take it for granted, but those who cannot are stuck with problems that can pervade their whole lives. We have come a long way since 1979. At the beginning the right to buy was dismissed and opposed by most Opposition Members. It is now an established fact of our housing. The battle over the right to buy has been won, game, set and match. It is the consensus, except, of course, among the alliance who are not wholly in favour of the right to buy under all circumstances. Alliance Members wish to give a little local discretion to councils to have it here and not there. *[Interruption.]* We do not know what they are up to in extremist, loony Liberal Tower Hamlets. *[Interruption.]* I will break my self-denying ordinance not to give way to Opposition Members if an hon. Member wants to force me to give way over Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I could see how reluctant the hon. Gentleman was. I was simply saying from a sedentary position that we know exactly what is happening in Tower Hamlets. It is a mixture of inefficiency, incompetence, some mind-blowing decisions on homelessness which verge on racialism, and five, six or seven chief executives.

Mr. Patten: It is indeed a remarkable local authority. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for setting the record straight.

Most local authorities are now operating the right to buy fairly and efficiently, including most Labour authorities. They know that it is what their tenants—their customers—want. I do not know what the hon. Member for Perry Barr thinks, but I think that we should talk less about tenants and more about customers. That is how we should regard people who rent in the public sector.

Most local authorities are operating the right to buy fairly and well and I pay tribute to them, but a handful of authorities are not doing so. The performance of a handful of authorities on the right to buy is lamentable. Tenants are being discouraged from applying and when they do apply cases are delayed interminably. I do not know whether the cause is incompetence or some sort of sullen rearguard foot-dragging by councillors in those particular constituencies, but we are monitoring the situation closely from month to month. We know where the matter is deteriorating, and it is not just in Leicester, but in Camden, Islington, Lewisham and Sheffield.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Minister give way? That is not true.

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman is lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will be able to make his point later.

There is foot-dragging in Sheffield and in loony Liberal, extremist Tower Hamlets there are also considerable delays in processing right-to-buy applications.

The Government have powers to intervene and we shall not hesitate to use them unless the performance of those

[Mr. Patten]

local authorities improves soon. We may need new legislation to protect the rights given to tenants by the House.

My deepest wish is that we should not have to discuss this issue. The fault lies among a few Labour councils and I make it clear that I recognise that most local authorities of all political colours are operating the system fairly and well. It is the few who are bringing discredit on the many.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Is my hon. Friend aware that in the campaigns for the local government elections that are currently taking place in many parts of the country, a systematic scare campaign is being organised by the Labour party telling council tenants that they will lose their security of tenure under the Housing and Planning Act 1986? Will he join me in condemning that?

Mr. Patten: I join my hon. Friend in utterly condemning those tactics. They have been used by only a few Labour councils such as Leicester, which seems to be on my lips a lot this afternoon, and Nottingham. Those leaflets are simply not telling the truth and they are being distributed at ratepayers' expense. The facts are set down in the Housing and Planning Act 1986.

Choice is no empty slogan. In the same way as the right to rent will bring individual and corporate capital into the rented sector of housing again, where so much effort has been put into squeezing it out, choice in housing is directly related not just to the amounts of public money, but to the amount of private money that is put into it, as the hon. Member for Perry Barr recognised. Private expenditure on housing has already taken over the burden of most housing expenditure in this country. That means that most decisions on housing expenditure on new building and repairs and maintenance are taken by private individuals, not by central Government or local authorities.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: There is one major exception—renting. We intend to put that right.

Mr. Marlow: Although this does not affect me, despite what Opposition Members may say, does my hon. Friend accept that one reason why decisions are hard to come by is that in some of these areas, which are largely Labour-controlled authority areas, where the demand for housing is greatest it takes the longest time to get planning permission to build houses to satisfy that demand?

Mr. Patten: That is very sad. The speedy granting of planning permission can speed up the provision of much needed houses.

There is a need for an increased supply of permanent rented accommodation in London, other high pressure areas and elsewhere. We are all agreed that more rented accommodation is needed. That is common ground. However, I do not believe that the answer lies with wholesale council housing or wholesale municipalisation. But that is not to say that local authorities do not have a role. I do not say that. However, we must move away from the inevitable inefficiencies, rationing and queues that arise when we have a managed economy in rented housing.

I do not believe that the managed economy has worked particularly well since the second world war. We must recreate a true and well-targeted market in rented housing. That is one way of helping those people who are accepted as homeless under the homeless persons legislation and those who do not fall within the priority needs categories, such as the young, mobile people seeking jobs or those who simply do not want to buy a home, but rent. Who are we to deny them that choice? That is effectively what we are doing today.

The right to rent will help. It means that there must be an adequate supply of rented housing for those who wish to be tenants rather than home owners. It means encouraging responsible landlords to enter or remain in the rented sectors to that those who wish to become tenants can choose the type of landlord that they want. Why should there be only one kind of landlord available — largely the local authority supported by housing associations? We must tackle the appalling contradiction of increasing homelessness at a time when there are 540,000 empty privately owned homes in this country.

How is the right to rent to be achieved? First, new landlords must be able to charge rents that give an adequate rate of return on their investment. We have seen the effects of low rents on the investment in private housing. We have also seen that effect on the face of public housing. Those authorities that have set consistently low rents and failed to collect them have not had the resources to repair and maintain their housing stock.

Private rented accommodation has shrunk to only 8 per cent. of housing and that is a uniquely low figure for the western world. Alas, much of that housing is in a poor state of repair. In Switzerland, 60 per cent. of people rent their homes privately. In West Germany the figure is 43 per cent., and in the United States, Canada and France it is around 30 per cent. or 35 per cent.

Only in this country do we not have a viable independent private rented sector. It strikes me that when there is agreement between such newspapers as the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* about the need for change in this area, we are really in business. I do not point the finger just at today's editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* which states that we should move on this front. That is not surprising, but very welcome support. Opposition Members need only look at *The Guardian* and its editorial of 24 March. That was a very interesting editorial. First, it said things in my praise. When *The Guardian* says things in my praise, a slight tremor goes up my spine. It makes me worried. However, I was not worried when I read the phrase which I quote from memory, from the third leader in *The Guardian* on 24 March 1987 which stated:

"The private rented sector has a vital role to play."

When there is that kind of agreement between commentators with different political views, we are in business for the kind of social change that undoubtedly we are going to see during the next few years.

We have made a start with assured tenancies. The hon. Member for Perry Barr referred to that. I am grateful for the support from the Opposition and I am pleased to tell the House that interest in assured tenancies is growing fast. I can announce that we have just approved, together with our colleagues in Wales—I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson) is here this afternoon — applications from another 41 bodies for approved landlord status. That brings the total to 270, with many more applications in the pipeline. I believe that the measures in the Housing and Planning Act 1986 and

the new 30 per cent. grant regime will provide a considerable further boost. We shall see great developments in that area.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr was correct in his comments about the need for more mixed public and private sector funding. In some areas, landlords would need to charge very high rents simply to cover their costs. That might choke off the development of the private independent rented sector at an early stage and that sector would not get going. The new arrangements for mixed public and private sector funding which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have introduced—often called the "30 per cent. grant schemes"—can bridge the gap between affordable rents—that is what we must be considering—and those necessary to give an adequate return to the landlord.

The new funding arrangements for the Housing Corporation are very important. For the present financial year the corporation has been given an extra £20 million to which it has added £10 million from its existing programme for schemes that will raise between another £50 million to £60 million from the private sector. We shall be approaching £100 million of half to two thirds privately funded housing for the homeless, the young job seeker and the person moving from north to south. The rest of the money is being raised privately through index-linked mortgage loans and other ways.

The Housing Corporation has not actually been overwhelmed, but it has an enormous number of schemes to consider. It has received about 300 applications from housing associations already this year to take up the funding. There are private institutions in the City of London with available funds queuing up to match their funds to the housing association funds. We shall see a great development in this form of mixed funding.

In addition, at the last meeting of the Housing Consultative Council for England in November—a body which I have the privilege and honour to chair—the Labour-dominated Association of Metropolitan Authorities asked me specifically to give local authorities similar opportunities to carry out 30 per cent. grant schemes. I remember it was that nice Councillor Clive Betts who asked the question. I announced immediately a reaction on 5 February that local authorities would be given wider powers to assist privately let housing. We have included proposals to grant those powers in the Local Government Bill under consideration at the moment. I said that the use of the new and existing powers would be subject to the Secretary of State's consent, but that we would seek to give as wide a general consent as we could to such schemes. We have already issued five general consents and we intend to issue more.

Of course, there must be some controls on capital expenditure in local government and I hope that the hon. Member for Perry Barr was not trying to leave the impression with the House that if a Labour Government came along there would be no more capital controls on local government.

Mr. Rooker: No.

Mr. Patten: I am glad to learn that that was not what he was saying. We are in exciting new territory here on the development of joint public and private sector funding. It is this joint approach to funding that will help to make the right to rent a very rapid reality.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): When my hon. Friend talks about funding for housing associations, he must surely be aware that the Labour-controlled city council of Nottingham has just earmarked £2·5 million to build a new office block for its own housing department. That in itself may be all right, but is he aware that £1·8 million will come out of the housing investment programme, money which should be used to modernise my constituents' houses but which will instead be used to provide offices? The money is being taken from housing associations.

Mr. Patten: I am absolutely appalled to hear that Nottingham city council, which is a Labour-controlled authority, I understand, should take £1·8 million from its housing investment programme. These resources could have been spent on providing better housing in Nottingham; instead, the council has tried to provide better offices for its own staff. It shows a very odd order of priorities indeed. Doubtless the people of Nottingham will seek the opportunity to make their own judgment on the council in the forthcoming local elections.

The Government have in the past eight years brought about radical and irreversible changes, making the meeting of the wishes of the people the top priority. Many people want to own their own homes so we have made it possible for many more to do so. There are now 20 per cent. more owner-occupied dwellings than in 1979. Over a million public sector dwellings have been sold since that year, mostly to sitting tenants. Now we are turning to the rented sector. If only the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) and his ideologically bound friends in the Labour party were more sensible about the Rent Acts, we would not have our present appalling homelessness figures. He and his friends are the guilty men.

We have significantly increased tenants' rights through the tenants' charter and other measures since 1979, but I have to ask the House whether we should not give tenants a greater right to select their own landlords. Should we not give the public sector tenants, the customers of local authorities, more opportunity to choose their own landlords? That is why I questioned the assumption that new town housing should automatically be transferred to district councils when new town corporations were wound up. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State announced on 25 March that the Government would consider proposals to transfer new town housing to other landlords.

We have, for example, the situation in Telford, where a consortium of five housing associations, led by the Coventry Churches housing association, wishes to offer the tenants of the outgoing Telford development corporation the genuine choice, backed by building society money and with no call on public funds, between it and the Wrekin district council as landlords. I would not want to stand in the way of people being given that opportunity to express their own choice. That is why my hon. Friend made this very important announcement on 25 March.

There is much food for thought in that approach. We are determined to give potential new tenants a choice, something that they have not had for many years. We have devised the methods that are needed to bring in private sector funding. Our efforts on behalf of the public sector customers, through the tenants' charter and other approaches, show that we really put our customers first.

[Mr. Patten]

Having brought owner-occupation to millions and having given the right to buy to the people of this country, we now intend to restore the right to rent to those who choose to use it. That will give us the balanced housing policy that the country needs for the 1990s.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. This is a very short debate, and very short speeches will be in order.

5.14 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Unlike the two Front Bench speakers, I intend to reduce the speech that I was going to make, in the interests of giving others the chance to join in. I am happy to have interventions about Tower Hamlets, but they will be added to what I intend to say about housing in general.

Since the Minister's translation from the Department of Health and Social Security to the Department of the Environment he has tried to rehabilitate himself from his old finger-wagging days, but, as we have seen today, he sometimes reverts to that "student union" kind of indulgence. He is dealing with the subject admirably, and then suddenly says that he will give way when it comes to something that he thinks may be of some assistance against the alliance in Tower Hamlets. It is the ultimate cynicism in dealing with Tower Hamlets not to tell the House that his Government rate-capped Tower Hamlets at £124 million, which is wholly inadequate, and the local authority has had to quadruple the amount spent on homelessness in the face of what the Select Committee on Home Affairs calls a national problem. It is the height of cynicism and it undermines the whole style of what the Minister is trying to tell the House.

The whole question of empty houses is nothing like as simplistic as the Minister pretended. To begin with, many of the houses are incapable of repair, and some are unlettable when repaired, as I know, alas, in Leeds. Many of them are mismatched with the needs of the people in the locality. No local authority wants to keep one house empty for a moment longer than necessary, because it loses revenue by doing so. To pretend that one can solve the housing problem by re-renting a few rented houses is ludicrous.

It is important to look at the terms of the motion. The aims of the motion are splendidly Utopian and wholly unobjectionable, but what the public demand of politicians is not simply a statement of what or why, but an explanation of how. This is the danger courted by the Labour Opposition. Its members tend to fall down when it comes to telling the House how they will achieve their aims. No one would object to the aims themselves.

Let us look, first, at the resources available for housing. The first thing to point out is that the Government have made the most draconian cuts of all in housing. The reduction of some 60 per cent. in real terms since 1979 is one major reason for our current housing problem. When I first assumed my new role as housing spokesman, I believed that there was an overall shortage of cash for housing and that there would be a great problem in putting together the resources required to solve the problem of housing, but now I find differently. Resources do exist. The problem is how we put them together with the need. I find, for instance, that the Halifax building society, one of the largest housing finance organisations in the world, is anxious to help alleviate the housing crisis in this country, to put money into local authorities and to seek to find a way of partnership and management that helps to do that. As recently as 27 March the Halifax building society put £29 million into a housing scheme in Notting Hill, which shows that resources are available if only we can bring them to the needs.

We must also unlock the resources that exist in people's own houses. Like other hon. Members, I see many constituents, most of them elderly, who are desperately worried about a particular repair that is required, perhaps a new roof or something of that sort, for which they have no cash, but what they often have is resources in their own houses, for which, with good Yorkshire thrift, they paid many years ago. The question there is how we assist people to unlock some of the resources of their own housing to help them to do repairs. Ways did, of course, exist. One way was through the building societies but building societies are now prevented from making interest-only loans. That was one way of getting money because elderly people could cope with an interest-only loan, but it has now been stopped.

The other question in terms of unlocking resources is that of tenure, of return on investment and of what guarantee can be given by local authorities to private finance. This is very important if we are to get away from the ideological straitjacket in which the parties have been locked for far too long. The political consensus on housing is growing, but it is doing so with certain hiccups, one of which is the question of the private rented sector. I accept what the Minister says, that the private rented sector has a role.

Looking at the old properties and the terraced houses that have been so popular and beloved by so many people, one of the sad things in my city is that the houses that are in council ownership are, all too often, the dilapidated ones, not those that are privately rented or those that are owner-occupied. We do not necessarily have the bad landlords who are apparently so rife in areas where there is much more housing stress than there is in the north.

The second crucial area is the assessment of need. I am puzzled by the Government's failure to meet their own assessment of housing need. On their own assessment, about £18 billion is required to cope with the backlog of maintenance work in public housing. Other estimates put the figure far higher, stating, for example, that about £50 billion is required in total. It is bizarre that, having tried to sell the concept of the right to buy to local authorities on the basis that those resources would be available for capital investment in housing, since imposing the right to buy the Government have limited that amount to 20 per cent. Therefore, the housing authorities are incapable of coping with their own needs because of the vast millions of pounds that are locked up in their balances under the 20 per cent. rule.

I should like to illustrate my points by reference to my city. The Government commissioned private consultants to survey the housing stock in Leeds. Those Government-appointed consultants estimated that £600 million was needed for repairs and improvements to the public housing stock. The council estimates that perhaps another £340 million is required for the private sector, for the repair grants and the back-to-back refurbishments that are required for the unfit houses. Moreover, even when faced

with the evidence of the Government's own consultants, the housing investment programme for Leeds is £22·3 million in 1986-87, which, in real terms, is a third down over three years. The amount for 1987-88 is down still further to £19·86 million. There is no way in which local authorities can cope with the housing needs that have been identified and accepted in their areas.

The motion has some curious wording. When it begins, it states in the names of those right hon. and hon. Opposition Members who have tabled it that they want every household

"to occupy a dwelling of the size, type, standard and location suitable to its needs".

It is only when the motion deals with tenure that it refers to a "choice". That seems reminiscent of the old paternalism that I thought the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) had got rid of in his thinking on housing. Therefore, there is a bizarre dichotomy in the motion, which refers to "needs" at the beginning and "choice" later. That is an important point.

Mr. Rooker: Perhaps I can make it clear that I moved the motion, and when I stopped reading it out, I said that I carried with me a list of organisations. Those words in the motion came, word for word, from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. I am quite happy to have those words in the motion, as they are supported by all those other organisations.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I was aware of what the hon. Gentleman had said. However, the words on the Order Paper are his, wherever they were taken from.

It is important to note that the provision of housing is not an absolute right in the same way as is health. If a person has diabetes, he or she requires insulin in the proportion that is required by the disease. However, in housing there is a choice to be exercised, which is outwith the need for shelter. It is shelter that is the absolute need, not how it is provided. There are people—I know them in my city—who prefer to have a smaller and cheaper house so that they can have a car, holiday or caravan. That is their choice. Of course, one can still obtain housing cheaply in Leeds to enable that choice to be made. However, if one takes away that choice, or the possibility of it, as has happened so often because of clearance, one takes away the possibility of someone being able to have the other things that he wants. Once someone is forced into the rented sector, that person is invariably forced to live at the margin. No choice is left to that person, and such people cannot decide the type or size of house that they require.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I shall give way, but I should like to get on and enable other hon. Members to make their speeches in their own way.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am interested in his remarks about choice. Would he care to tell the House what choice the 140 Bangladeshi families have, when the Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets council proposes to throw them on the streets in the next two weeks?

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Gentleman has picked the wrong place. I started off by talking about the Tower Hamlets problem with Bangladeshis. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about that, he might consider how on earth one can afford to cope with that problem in Tower Hamlets, which is a national problem, rather than cynically using that issue as a bargaining point for votes in Tower Hamlets. That is monstrous.

Mr. Corbyn: Answer the question.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The same thing is happening in Camden, which is under the control of the hon. Gentleman's party. Camden is going down the same path as Tower Hamlets. On 20 March the policy and resources committee in Camden had to start re-assessing the offers that it made to people entering the borough for exactly the same reasons. It could not afford the generous implications of the policies of the past.

The Minister's record on housing choice in local authorities has not been very good. When I first joined the Leeds city council, I recall that it was the Minister's party that was removing choice. His party went for a policy of clearance of the old properties in Leeds, which turned out to be disastrous. I hope that we can get away from the idea that one can have area clearance and still maintain housing choice. That cannot be done, because it blights entire areas, causes further demolition and further need for such clearance in the future.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meadowcroft: Yes, but if I give way that will take time from other speeches.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: If one takes the hon. Gentleman's point to its logical conclusion, there would be no clearance of absolutely intolerably poor housing in slum areas, and of course such clearance must be performed. It is a question of judgment.

Mr. Meadowcroft: We are back to the question of choice. I do not see how it is possible for politicians to say to adults that they will decide whether those adults' houses should remain standing. One cannot say that. The previous policy should have been one of improvement, rather than of demolition. The fact is that we have demolished many houses that did not need to be demolished and, in their place, we have built houses that have turned out to be worse. Those houses are now the problem.

I was told by Conservative Members that one could not take one house out of a terrace and replace it with another house. I was told that that was impossible. However, I was then sent to campaign at a by-election in the centre of Newcastle and went to canvass on a street where that had happened. A house had been taken out of the terrace and a new one had been put in. That was a splendid solution. It meant that older people could have a smaller flat inside that house, near to their friends, relatives and neighbours. However, we were told that such a solution was not possible. We have demolished and cleared too much and we should not have done so.

We must, however, consider the problem of system building, and its demolition. The Housing Defects Act 1984 nowhere near covers the problems of pre-reinforced concrete housing. Nor does it deal with the problems of other types of system-built housing, for example, Caspon, Myton and Reema. We need to reconsider the way in which we cope with people being able to repair those houses, or have them bought back.

[Mr. Meadowcroft]

We need more dwellings of all types. Therefore, our predisposition should be against demolition where there is the possibility of improvement.

We should reduce the immense pressure on the south-east, where house prices, or more accurately, land prices spiral upwards, way ahead of inflation. It seems to me that it is no longer possible for young people, as first-time buyers, in the south-east to have the type of housing which we, in the north, would regard as adequate or desirable. That will not do.

Furthermore, the imposition of the Government's poll tax, the community charge, will put up house prices further, because it takes away the tax on property and puts in on to individuals. Therefore, house prices will be forced up.

Money is available. The question for us, as politicians, is how we bring together need and resources. In the forthcoming election we shall be judged on whether we are seen to be able to achieve that key aim of bringing together resources and need.

5.28 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I believe that the hon. Member for Leeds West (Mr. Meadowcroft) is a jazz musician, with skills on the clarinet. I am not an addict, but I understand that there is a time when recital takes place and the rest of the instruments fall quiet while the clarinettist plays on his own, uninhibited by the need to remain in harmony and unrestricted by beat, and when he can grab some themes, perhaps from old tunes, and continue until he is out of breath, when he signals that the time has come for his colleagues to come in. We have listened to a clarinet solo without the clarinet.

During the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction we heard of many areas of success in housing. We heard of the buoyancy of the private sector, in which starts are at a record level and making a direct contribution to meeting housing needs. We heard also of the diversification of tenure, not just through the right to buy, but through other initiatives, such as the promotion of tenant co-operatives, shared ownership, leasehold schemes for the elderly, and the rest.

My hon. Friend also explained how we were breaking down barriers between the public and private sectors by encouraging joint ventures between local authorities, house builders, building societies and housing associations. He explained the choice for tenants, particularly those in new towns, of different types of landlord apart from the local authority.

I shall speak briefly about the outstanding problem of homelessness, which I know concerns my hon. Friends on the Front Bench and which formed a large part of the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). As a London Member, I see at first hand the growing number of homeless people, reflected in the figures — people attracted to London by the buoyant economy, casualties of marital breakdown, and young people who have left home earlier than would otherwise have been the case. Naturally, hon. Members on both sides are worried about the numbers and the conditions in which many families now live in bed-and-breakfast hotels, often in Paddington. Both hon. Members and the public are worried about the cost.

I believe that it is possible to get every family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London out within six months without disadvantaging anyone else on the waiting lists, without an expensive public-sector programme of building for rent, as the Opposition advocated, and without sending families to areas where they do not want to go. I advocate a dramatic, imaginative expansion of a scheme which is already in operation in several boroughs under the control of various parties and which enables local authority tenants in areas of housing shortage to leave their home and buy a house outside London.

Many tenants in London who have been given the right to buy do not want to buy the flat in which they live, but cannot afford to move out. The scheme gives them a capital sum in lieu of the discount to which they would have been entitled had they exercised the right to buy, to enable them to move out. It is targeted on those who do not have the resources to do so without that help. Local authorities then get a relet at a fraction of the cost of new build and quickly, and a homeless family is taken from bed-and-breakfast accommodation, saving taxpayers' and ratepayers' money.

One could quickly get about 30,000 relets for families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London by promoting that scheme. Certainly, many tenants in my constituency who have retired and no longer have to live in London would like to move to be near friends and relatives elsewhere, but they need a grant of £8,000 or £10,000 to enable them to do so.

Such a scheme is wholly consistent with the philosophy of the Conservative party, which is to concentrate resources of local authorities on people who need them, to encourage home ownership and to promote mobility within London. The Government have already put a similar scheme on the statute book by giving tenants of charitable housing associations a right to a transferable discount. That scheme, which is operated by housing associations, has freed several properties in London and enabled more rapid progress to be made on the waiting lists.

If one is to do something about homelessness in London, one must adopt such a scheme, whatever the potential inequities or problems. I submit it as a scheme, not to promote home ownership, but to tackle the growing problems of homelessness. That is the right way to tackle homelessness in London.

The London borough of Ealing is tackling homelessness in the wrong way. It is underwriting the municipalisation of private housing estates in the borough. One flat being bought by a housing association, but being underwritten by Ealing council, is costing £180,000. That sort of deal does not add to the housing stock. It simply swaps the tenure from home ownership to rented accommodation. It denies that accommodation, which is being built by the private sector, to many people living in Ealing and Acton who were hoping to buy those flats. The flats are no longer available and the people must wait to find something else. If £180,000 is available merely for one unit, the council could find many better ways of using it, such as the scheme that I outlined.

I do not propose to speak on any other subject. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate I hope that he will say how the review in the Department, which is evaluating the scheme in London, is progressing, what

the time scale is, and whether there is any chance of the Government taking action on homelessness by promoting more vigorously the initiative that I have described.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) for his brevity.

5.34 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) made a sensible point when he said that it was vital that people understood there was no such thing as blanket solutions to the housing needs of different areas. Sadly, for all the Government's rhetoric about choice in the housing market, in reality they are trying to impose an ideological straitjacket which simply does not fit. That can be well illustrated by the abysmal failure of the Government's housing policies in Manchester and Greater Manchester.

It is conceded by Labour politicians and our political opponents that at present Manchester has a housing crisis. More than one and a half times the national average of houses in the city of Manchester are considered to be overcrowded, and the position is getting worse, not better. There is a freezing of choice, even in Manchester which has a massively higher number of relets of local authority properties than other authorities. The Government's actions are inflicting human misery throughout the Manchester area because of the resulting housing conditions.

There is a housing stock of nearly 100,000 and about 37,000 people are on the housing waiting list. Many hon. Members may wish to dismiss some of those people, but I do not because each person represents somebody who is badly housed. As everybody involved in housing in Manchester recognises, the housing transfer list will never offer any hope for many people, although their circumstances are intolerable.

Recently a constituency case was brought to my attention of a family living in a three-bedroomed house. The married couple had one bedroom, their teenage son another and their four daughters shared the third. Because of the acute crisis in housing, their problem will not be resolved in the near future. Neither I, nor the chairman of the housing committee as a local councillor can offer them any hope. Such is the misery that is inflicted.

Conservative Members say that the crisis is the fault of the wicked public sector. Sadly, Manchester is now a poor city. About 70 per cent. of its population is described as low-paid by well-established definitions, or as out of work. The proposed private sector solutions are not available to those people and are ridiculous. The same national builders whom my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr said were tickling up house prices in the south-east have approached the local authority in Manchester to ask whether it will buy the houses they have built for purchase because they cannot sell them at cost. Indeed, they cannot even sell the houses when the price is dropped below cost. Therefore, neither national builders nor local builders will build to sell when the housing market in the city simply does not exist.

The pre-first world war terraced houses in Moss Side have been considerably improved, sometimes to a good standard, but those houses cannot be sold easily because the cost of modernisation is greater than their market price. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) is right to say that such houses should not be demolished, but without a significant public sector contribution they will eventually have to be demolished. The public sector will have to take responsibility for that type of housing in our inner-city areas.

Private rented accommodation simply does not exist. I was perplexed to hear the Minister say that after eight years of Conservative Government there was an awakening private sector about to unleash itself to solve my constituents' problems. Eight years is a long time for people to wait in appalling housing circumstances and it is a long time for a hypocritical Government to discover their compassion for those whose housing conditions are intolerable. It is about time that the Government came clean and said that their ideology is not relevant to areas such as my own.

We can look across the border from the city of Manchester, which is labour-controlled, to the conservative-controlled borough of Trafford, which failed to build any houses for the general housing public sector market, except for a few of what my friends on the local authority called Noddy houses at the time, which the Government put on offer before the general election in 1979, when they said that all authorities that got houses up to the eaves by a certain date could have the money. Trafford Conservative council decided that, for the first time since reorganisation, it would go in for that. It did not achieve its objective in terms of getting houses up to the required standard and had to pay the full whack itself. But we know that that was just an election ploy, similar to the election ploys that we are seeing now. Clearly, apart from the faint hope for the private sector, housing is not something on which the Government feel emboldened to offer anything in terms of electoral bribes.

One of the big criticisms by constituents concerns the number of voids in the ownership of both local authorities. This concerns me and must concern everybody. I would feel much better hearing hon. Gentlemen talk about voids in local authority housing stock if they would join us in pressing the Government on this point. On the Langley estate in Manchester some 600 houses are now vacant, which is a very large number; but the reason is that the concrete floors and the sulphate in the soil have made those houses uninhabitable. Yet, when the local authorities approach the Government for the money to repair the houses, that money is simply not available. Manchester is not repairing its housing stock, so it has to see its houses boarded up, vandalised and not let to families which could use them.

The reason for the overwhelming majority of those voids is the underfunding of the capital budget for local authorities, and that is something for which central Government have to take direct responsibility. That situation applies throughout the land.

Housing in this country is now severely underfunded, and this is true of both local authority housing and housing in the hands of owner-occupiers. In my own constituency owner-occupiers, who are very often on moderate incomes, find even the improvement grant system that exists no help to them. One of my unemployed constituents has been trying for some time now to get some assistance with his own home, but when it comes down to realities and the funding of his portion of the grant he simply cannot afford to take on that kind of debt. More

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to the point, he cannot find anybody who would lend it to him. So for many people there is an underfunding of housing.

The private institutions do not cope with that kind of problem. The local authorities are not in a position to do so, not because they do not want to but because the Government will not let them. At the end of the day, the housing crisis in this country is a crisis inflicted by this Government which affects the way of life and the quality of life of the people of Britain.

5.42 pm

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): I must first say how much I agree with the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and I shall follow him by speaking briefly to one point only. Reference has already been made to the matter of empty properties on both the private side and the council side. I intend to talk about the council side because I think that the empty properties on the private side are empty through the fault of the House, because of the Rent Acts.

In May of last year I was talking to a constituent in Hambalt road, in Clapham, about some problem she had, and she said that she wished that her daughter could move into the flat next door, which had been empty for 10 years and was owned by the council. I wrote to Lambeth council and asked if it was true that the flat had been empty for 10 years. I had no reply, but two weeks later a team moved in and put in central heating and did the flat up. I checked again last month, March, and the flat was still empty. The constituent who told me about it said that it had been empty for 10 years and the lady downstairs said that it had been empty for 8½ years. There was a slight difference there, but certainly it was empty for more than 9 years. Somebody has now moved in because I created such a row in the local press.

I think that it must have fallen off the local council books in some way. I do not believe that even Lambeth council would have left it empty deliberately for so long. It bought it some 10 years ago and it remained empty all that time.

I think that the Government must take some responsibility for collecting figures from local councils in a more co-ordinated and comprehensible way. I started looking to see what was available in terms of statistics on empty properties, waiting lists and so on, and here are a few of the figures. They come from different sources and they contradict each other. As I say, there is a need for some correlation.

First, the council house waiting list in inner London, in March 1985, was 142,500. So there were very nearly 150,000 people waiting, of which it was said that 128,000 were "in need", whatever that definition may mean. That point has been raised already.

Secondly, bed-and-breakfast homeless in inner London in March 1986 amounted to about 3,500 families, and the cost, according to the Association of London Authorities, had risen from £3 million in 1981-82 to £11 million in 1984-85. It also said that the number would be up to about 12,000 by 1989 unless the policies were changed. So everyone must agree that there is a massive problem here.

Looking at the supply side, according to the same association, those councils, which are basically the inner London councils, have some 20,000 empty properties between them. That is a far higher percentage than an average management estate would have. To be honest, I do not know what percentage it is, but it is very high. I could not, however, get a breakdown. Nowhere did it say how long the properties had been empty or why they were empty.

I then looked at Lambeth and Wandsworth, where I had direct access to more specific figures. I need hardly tell the House that Wandsworth is Conservative-controlled and well managed and Lambeth is Labour-controlled and badly managed.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Can the hon. Gentleman help me with a mystery, if that is the proposition? Why is it, then, that Wandsworth has more empty council houses than Lambeth?

Mr. Shelton: If the hon. Gentleman will restrain himself for a moment, I will come to that precise point.

Lambeth has 1,500 homeless, while Wandsworth has 750. The boroughs are more or less the same size. Lambeth has a waiting list of 13,000 and Wandsworth has a waiting list of 5,950. Lambeth has 865 squatted properties; Wandsworth has 11. Lambeth has a 26-week turnover in lettings; Wandsworth has a two-week to three-week turnover. But — this is the point which the hon. Gentleman raised—Lambeth claims to have only 1,388 empty properties, 2.7 per cent. of its stock, while Wandsworth has 1,071, 3.7 per cent. of its stock. That brings me back to the point, that these figures should be put forward in a comparable way. I will explain this anomaly.

Lambeth excludes squatters from its voids. If we add the number of squatters to Lambeth's voids, we get 2,193, so 3.9 per cent. of its properties are either squatted in or void. On the other hand, in Wandsworth 935 houses on the waiting list are being renovated prior to sale. If we abstract those, it has only 136 waiting to be let, or 0.4 per cent., compared with Lambeth's 3.9 per cent.

It really is nonsense that councils put forward figures in such extraordinarily different ways, misleading normally intelligent people such as the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), who is a Lambeth Member and was delighted by those figures, as I was until I looked into them. I found that, instead of Lambeth having fewer empty properties as a percentage than Wandsworth, it had 3·9 per cent. including squatting, whereas Wandsworth had only 0.4 per cent.

In conclusion, we need more information about empty properties, squatters and the homeless. We need to avoid disgraces like the flat owned by Lambeth council that had been empty for 10 years. A year ago I told Lambeth council about it. It did it up, and put in central heating, but it was still empty 10 months later. If the hon. Member for Norwood approves of that, I shall be delighted to publish his approval in my local press.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): What about those in Wandsworth?

Mr. Shelton: I will suggest to my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that the Government should designate certain local authorities which should be obliged to submit to the Department—and make public locally—lists of empty properties in their ownership, compiled on a like-for-like basis, including or excluding whether they are squatted, and how long they have been empty, if they have been empty for more than six months.

No property needs to be empty for more than six months, unless it is being rebuilt, in which case the local authority would say that it was being rebuilt. I accept that some work is involved, but the homeless and those who are poorly housed should demand that councils should not keep a good flat empty for 10 years because it happened to fall off the books.

5.51 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) is, like many of his colleagues, full of hypocrisy on these matters. Local authorities have been starved of money to meet the requirements of local people to repair their houses. Because of that, many problems have developed, particularly over the last eight years. The basic responsibility is with the Government and not with local authorities, but the local authorities are not entirely excused.

I want to raise the question of choice. I am becoming worried about it because I hear about choice all the time, and to some extent I even read it in our own motion. I am not certain what is meant by choice. People have choice if they have money. Anybody who has money can buy a house where they want to buy one. That has always been so. Some people have always had that choice.

But the ordinary mass of working people, who have no money and cannot afford to raise cash so that they can get a mortgage, have no choice. Those are the people that I am worried about. The Labour movement must be concerned about them because those are the people we really represent. We represent them; no one else will.

John Wheatley, the first Housing Minister in a Labour Government, was a man of fine character. Five hundred thousand houses arose out of the Wheatley Act. Incidentally, he was always referred to, when alive, as one of the loony Left—and he was a Roman Catholic, so one can be a Roman Catholic and a member of the loony Left. People like Wheatley were doing that job for those in need.

Masses of people are in need now and require help. They cannot get accommodation unless they are assisted by local authorities. It is only through local authorities that the housing needs of these people can be met and necessary repairs made. I am all in favour of choice. Those who have money and who do not want to live in a local authority house can move out and buy some other accommodation.

My local council—and its 47 members—has been disqualified. What did they do? They built almost 5,000 houses in three years. I know of a private estate in Liverpool, next to which the council has built council houses similar to the ones that were built for sale by the Liberals and Tories. Those council properties are full because the occupiers have been moved into them from slum housing. Other parts of the estate have sale signs up because people cannot afford the mortgage payments.

A couple in my constituency—perhaps an example of many other couples—could not afford to pay the mortgage payments and had been negotiating for some time with a building society. One evening they went home and discovered that the building society, which already had the keys, had moved in and had changed all the locks on their house. I can happily give the names and details of that couple. All over Liverpool, the sale signs are going up not only on houses that were built by or through the local authority but also on older properties that people have bought. That is happening because workers have been thrown out of work. They cannot afford the mortgage payments, and many of them are being evicted from their homes.

They are our people and they require more assistance than anyone else. We in the Labour party have to give them that help. It is our responsibility to ensure that those people are assisted, because this Government will not help them. This Government have made the position far worse since attaining office.

Statistics from the National Council of Building Material Producers—that body is certainly not an adjunct or affiliate of the Labour party—show that in 1979, in the public sector, 145,000 houses were being built, and that in 1986 46,200 were being built. In the private sector, for the same period, the number of houses being built increased, but not dramatically. Taking both private and public sectors together, the number of houses being built has gone down, although there has been an increase in the private sector as against the public sector.

How do people find somewhere to live? I will give an example of the homeless. I am a member of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians. Many of the membership have had to move to different parts of the country to seek employment. Many of them have come to London. The February issue of the union paper, *UCATT Viewpoint*, gives examples. Any hon. Member who has been round London at night will have seen what is happening; if hon. Members have not been, I urge them to go. In winter just round the back of Covent garden one could see people trying to get some warmth from cardboard boxes. The Minister should have a look. My union paper has photographs but hon. Members should go and see for themselves what conditions are like. A disgraceful position has developed. The Government are bringing us back to the days described by Jack London in his book, "The People of the Abyss". They do not give a damn about the ordinary people who are suffering without a shelter over their heads.

We must care. We must build houses, basically through the local authorities. We must stop talking about choice and make sure that people have a shelter over their heads. I shall support the motion but I hope that we will be more positive in what we put before the people at the general election. The Labour party must say that it is the only party that is concerned about meeting the needs of the people for shelter.

6.1 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) is always listened to with respect even if most of us on this side of the House reject his remedies. In particular we reject his belief that the future can lie only in council housing, but he is entitled to that view.

For some five years I have been a board member of Shelter and in that role have spent not a little time considering the problems of homelessness and bad housing, on which I shall concentrate now. In Shelter's view, a definition of a successful housing policy has three criteria: first, does everyone who needs an adequate home have one; secondly, is society meeting its responsibility to keep in reasonable repair the housing stock which is held in trust for future generations; thirdly, are Government ensuring that housing policies do not discriminate against

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particular sections of society or affect their ability to lead full and satisfying lives? I would need to make a long speech to cover each of those principles, but I certainly endorse that broad approach.

In the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, there is broad agreement across the Chamber that bad housing creates conditions for increased crime, bad health, stress, family breakdown, vandalism and all the other problems which we know only too well. Last year, £26 million was spent on the increased use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Goodness knows what the figure will be for the year to March 1987, but it will obviously be higher. That is indefensible on financial or social grounds. Such accommodation is provided at twice the cost of other accommodation.

The survey of houses in multiple occupation published at the beginning of the year showed that only a quarter of the estimated 200,000 homes concerned were adequate. There are now 100,000 homeless families. As I suspect most hon. Members are aware, that is the number accepted as homeless by local authorities. If we throw in those who are single or couples without children, we have to add another 203,000 people or families who are not accepted as homeless. The majority of the 100,000 accepted as homeless may have been unfortunate enough to be put out of work or may have suffered industrial injury which led to them being out of work. We must not think of them as a separate category.

I have long believed that we must continue to make use of housing associations. I welcome the increase of 21 per cent. in funding announced for the Housing Corporation for 1987-88. In high stress areas, housing associations have a major role to play. I am concerned that some recent changes may reduce that role. Housing associations will no longer be offered first refusal when public property is being disposed of. I regret that particularly, as I also understand that housing associations cannot buy at the outstanding historic debt. When those provisions are combined, it will be very difficult for housing associatons, particularly in areas such as central London, to buy property that would be suitable for people paying fair rents.

I wish godspeed to the Minister's latest initiative involving 30 per cent. housing association grants — or HAGs as they are quaintly termed. I hope that they are successful. He should remember that housing associations have a major role to play and that they should not be restricted in carrying out that role.

Mr. John Patten: I ask my hon. Friend to accept that in the near future we wish to see growth in the number of homes built by housing associations in partnership both with central Government and privately funded institutions. We see housing associations playing a particularly important role. I welcome the vigorous way in which housing associations are rising to the challenge.

Mr. Squire: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments. We shall all note them and shall expect to see the growth of which he has spoken.

I should like to refer specifically to mixed user grants, or MUGs. With MUGs and HAGs, it sounds a bit like pre-Wolfenden Paddington, but I am talking of 1980s housing. Mixed user grants apply when there is a prospect of a housing association acquiring property above a disused retail or industrial outlet. The rules do not allow housing associations to be responsible for the lower property. In rundown inner-city areas, this is denying activity to housing associations. St. Pancras housing association has been discussing the problem with my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey). In his reply to the debate he may be able to tell us what progress is being made.

On better use of empty property and potential empty property, I have been advocating for some time that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should find funds to encourage people to bring empty rooms in their property into use, particularly in inner cities. If the first £500 of rent thus received was free of tax, it would create a new source of supply of accommodation, particularly for young people aged 18 to 25 who gravitate to the cities, who cannot find anywhere to live and who end up living rough or in conditions of which we should be ashamed. Many elderly people would be only too pleased to have the extra income from the use of spare rooms. It would be a much more flexible way of dealing with mobile young people than requiring local authorities to provide accommodation for them. We should be looking closely at ways of finding the funds that would enable that to take place.

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): As to flexibility — as my hon. Friend knows, I have had a long relationship with housing associations — does my hon. Friend feel that the Department and the Minister should be giving local authorities and housing associations two or three-year programmes rather than a one-year programme? A one-year programme is extremely difficult to plan and often impossible to fulfil. If it were extended, there would be a better chance of using the available resources. In some authorities, such as Cheltenham, those funds are not used because it has been impossible to complete the programme.

Mr. Squire: The Minister will have heard my hon. Friend's interjection, which I would endorse.

One sector which needs not legislation but exhortation is the political encouragement of local authorities to make use of empty properties, not just their own — I do not have the time to develop what might be termed the expected line on council properties — but empty property which is lying unused within their boundaries. Currently, a number of authorities are doing that, so they do not need legislation. I shall quote an example which might not be expected of me — the London borough of Brent. Brent is working with local housing associations and over the past year it has leased 200 empty properties. Landlords are guaranteed vacant possession at the end of the lease, and the borough pays them a rent. It is a particularly good deal for owners who may otherwise have left the property to rot.

I know that what has happened in that area of high stress has happened elsewhere. I should like to see such schemes grow, because if they do not and if we continue to see a growth in company lets in central London side by side with the pressures for low-rent accommodation, we will face great problems in the future.

6.11 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Despite all the ministerial denials, there is an acute housing crisis in many parts of the country, as my hon. Friends have pointed out in this short debate.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) has spoken because he is one of the few Conservative Members who recognises that there is a real housing problem in this country.

It must be sickening to all those who are in desperate need of adequate accommodation to read and listen to Tory Housing Ministers denying that there is a problem. It is bad enough for a family to be forced to live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and not know how much longer they must put up with such miseries, or to live, as so many of my constituents do, in a high-rise block of flats with two children and be told that the chances of being allocated a house are remote.

How many young married couples, often with a child, who come to our surgeries or write to us, have no alternative but to live in one rented room, or in cramped conditions with parents or in-laws with all the accompanying domestic strain? Surely it aggravates such miseries to be told time and time again by Government Ministers that there is simply no housing problem at all. That is the sort of 1984 Orwellian position the Government adopt.

Tory Members of Parliament, and many others who are involved in that party at local level, have always deeply resented public sector rented housing. Indeed, some would go so far as to say that there has almost been a vendetta over the years against council dwellings. Since 1979 the Government have given effect to that resentment or vendetta. They have virtually made it financially impossible for many local authorities to build at all.

Reference has often been made previously by Ministers to the decline in council house building under the Labour Government, but in the last full year of that Administration over 100,000 new council houses and flats were being built. We know that in the last few years, and certainly in the current year, the figure is 30,000 new houses or flats or just under.

First and foremost, we need a substantial national house building programme in the public sector. Building houses and low-rise flats, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, is the most effective way of tackling the housing crisis.

It is no good those people who are on low incomes or unemployed being told that they can buy. What should I tell my constituents when they come to my surgery? Should I tell them that they should get a mortgage? They have no more chance of getting a mortgage than of going to Mars. The only way to resolve their housing crisis is for them to be housed by the local authority or a genuine housing association.

We must ensure that local authorities have the means to modernise and carry out large-scale repair work to old and structurally defective council properties. I shall refer briefly to what is happening in the borough of Walsall. Since 1979, no council properties have been built at all. Of course properties have been sold off, and I would just make this comment: much reference has been made by the Minister to the privately rented sector. The question that I and my hon. Friends have asked on many occasions is a simple one. The Government tell us that it is right in law for public sector tenants to be able to buy. Why should that not apply to private tenants? Why should there be a distinction? Why is it that private tenants are not given that right in law? the explanation is pretty obvious—no Tory Government would dream of giving private tenants the right to buy.

In Walsall too many pre-1939 properties have yet to be included in the modernisation programme. The explanation for that is known to the Minister because I have written to him on a number of occasions. There simply are not enough funds. Since the Minister is here, can I refer to the fact that a number of tenants in my constituency live in what are known as the "Wimpey no fines" properties. They are very concerned indeed that their properties are not to be modernised in the forthcoming financial year. I have written to the director of housing and I have been informed that there are not sufficient funds for the work to be carried out in 1987-88. I then wrote to the Housing Minister. Altogether in the borough, not just in my constituency, it would cost about £3·5 million to bring that type of concrete-built but not pre-cast dwelling up to scratch. That is about £3,500 per property.

Understandably, the tenants are up in arms at the state of these properties. I have already described them by their name—Wimpey no fines—and they were built just after the war. The problems with those dwellings include acute dampness, much condensation, rotting window frames, and so on.

When I have received deputations from the residents concerned, they say, "Well, Mr. Winnick, are we to spend another winter in such conditions?" As I have just mentioned, when I received a reply from the director of housing I immediately wrote to the Housing Minister and asked him whether he would be willing to receive a deputation as requested by the residents. The answer was in the negative, I am afraid. I understand that the tenants are not satisfied with the Minister's reply to me and that they intend to come to London. If they come to Marsham street I shall do my best to see that they are seen by a Minister or at least by a senior civil servant. It would be very discourteous of the Minister to tell my constituents that, having travelled over 100 miles to London, they cannot be seen when they arrive at the Department of the Environment.

What is required in this sector is a sufficient housing investment programme allocation to my local council and other housing authorities so that they can carry out their housing responsibilities of building, modernising and maintenance. The question which immediately arises is how much more it will cost if all the work that I have described is further delayed and not carried out in the next two or three years. It will certainly cost more, yet it is estimated that about 25 per cent. of those who are involved in the building trade are unemployed. Would it not be much more sensible for those people, instead of being jobless and having to rely on unemployment or supplementary benefit, to be building and modernising the properties so urgently required in the public sector?

Again, I am sure that this problem too is shared by a number of hon. Members.

In my constituency a number of elderly owner-occupiers are living in old properties. They cannot get an improvement grant. In some cases, they are unable to afford a new roof, for example. When I took these cases up with the local authority, I was told that there was no way in which any discretionary improvement grants could be made because of the lack of sufficient funding in the next financial year. I have been told that a large number of people in the borough — nearly 2,000 — have been waiting for over four years for such grants. Unless the money is forthcoming, my constituents will not be able to carry out the work because they cannot afford to do it

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themselves. When the Minister boasts about owner-occupation, he should think about these owner-occupiers as well. It is not too much to ask that they should be given the necessary funding to put on a new roof and other such essential work.

There is no future for the private rented sector. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Hornchurch that there is no reason why an owner-occupier should not let out a room. Labour Members would be the last to say that that would be wrong. However, the idea that the private rented sector can somehow be revived and provide accommodation at a reasonable rent is sheer moonshine. The Government are trying to bring back the legislation of 30 years ago—the notorious Rent Act 1957. On a previous occasion, I reminded the House that when that Act was in operation, I was a councillor in a borough in London. The Minister can smile about this if he wants, but I saw for myself the numbers of people who were evicted quite legally, and not as a result of Rachmanism. Why is it that, with a majority of 140, the Government have not legislated to do away with the Rent Acts? The simple reason is that they have been frightened to do so before a general election. We must warn the country and private tenants of what is likely to happen if the Government were to be re-elected. Rachmanism would come back with a vengeance.

The debate once again demonstrates the need for ample funding for the public sector and the need to ensure that improvement grants are made, so that, at the end of the day, all our people can be housed properly, whether they are owner-occupiers or council tenants. We need adequate accommodation for all our people, through the state or the voluntary housing sector.

6.21 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): No doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at your bedside there is a copy of this month's edition of "Roof" which is the magazine for Shelter. In that document you will find an interview given by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). It is a breathtaking interview. With that flamboyance that is characteristic of the Liberal party there are 10 photographs of the hon. Gentleman in different poses. It starts in the way that one might expect. It says:

"Meadowcroft didn't want to become the Alliance spokesman on housing and local government when the Liberals and SDP merged their parliamentary posts in January."

That will come as no surprise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you read the *Official Report* tomorrow and see the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, West.

It is an astonishing interview, because it shows that the hon. Gentleman is way to the Left of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). I shall give one or two quotations to illustrate this point. I emphasise that these words are not mine, but those of the official spokesman for the Liberal party. He said:

"right to buy discounts should be concentrated on less desirable properties. There would be no 'blanket discounts' if he had his way".

I shall be issuing a copy of this interview to my electorate, and I know that many of my hon. Friends will be doing the same. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to understand that those properties that he describes as less desirable have had an abated price by reason of the fact that the open market value of less desirable houses is lower than the open market value of more desirable houses. However, that truth has not dawned on the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman went on to say:

"Measures such as requiring owners of homes sold under the right to buy to sell back to the council if they move, however, could be used to ameliorate some of the worst effects of sales."

At the last general election the Labour party proposed that, where a person who had bought his house or flat under the right to buy wanted to sell, he should be under an obligation to offer it back to the council first. That was an obligation to remunicipalise. It was denying persons who had bought under the right to buy the same freedom as those who had not bought under the right to buy. In certain circumstances, that may still be the policy of the Labour party, but I am dealing with the Liberal party. We now have the official spokesman of the Liberal party saying that those who have bought under the right to buy —more than 1 million of them, including many of the hon. Gentleman's constituents—will, when they wish to sell, be denied the freedom to choose the purchaser and will have to sell it back to the council, if the hon. Gentleman gets his way.

That is not the only matter. Another short quotation shows the way in which the Liberal party never likes to offend anybody and always takes two sides simultaneously. I have further evidence for that proposition. The interviewer said:

"He doesn't go so far as to approve of Tower Hamlets' policy of selling tenanted blocks of flats, but he won't condemn it outright either."

As always, the Liberals are trying to have it both ways. No wonder that the person interviewing the hon. Gentleman reached this conclusion:

"Having thus nailed his colours to the mast, Michael Meadowcroft immediately begins to pull them down again."

I could not have put it better myself.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is under severe attack from the Liberals in Eastbourne. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the selling of council houses was first instituted in Leeds in 1974, when there was an agreement between his party and mine, to do it on the terms set out in that article and that this was very successful? That is an important point.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman would find it instructive to look up the record of how his party voted on what is now the Housing Act 1980, which gave the right to buy.

I find myself in respectful disagreement with my hon. Friend the Minister on only one aspect of his remarks. He said that he thought the hon. Member for Perry Barr had made a good speech, but I disagree. I thought that it was a muddled speech and that some of his supporters, who had been hoping that there would be a real strategy on housing from the Labour party, were disappointed. The speech bore all the hallmarks of a shadow Minister who knows that he will never hold office. That is part of the trouble with the Labour party.

I welcome the partial conversion of the hon. Member for Perry Barr to the policies enunciated and developed by my hon. Friend the Minister, and in the few minutes that remain to me I shall concentrate on one or two aspects of my hon. Friend's speech. He told the House that there were more than 100,000 houses and flats empty in the public sector, and more than 540,000 houses and flats

empty in the private sector. We may not know with total precision how accurate those figures are. We may not know precisely in what areas of the country they are, but we know one thing. If, as is the case, those figures are approximately accurate, and if, alongside those figures, we have the continuing scandal of homelessness and the continuing scandal—I hope that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has noted my choice of language—of some of the bed-and-breakfast accommodation, we cannot allow that number of empty houses and flats to continue.

With regard to the public sector, I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister the suggestion put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). I am particularly anxious that we should bring into use those houses and flats in the private sector that are presently under-used or unused. We must also consider the task of bringing into use that accommodation that exists in houses and flats where the owners would be willing to make a room or part of a house available for those who are presently homeless, but are discouraged from doing so. My hon. Friend the Minister rightly discussed the right to rent. However, he did not spell out—I appreciate why he did not—the specific proposals that we should adopt. We shall need more information than we received this afternoon when we come to write our manifesto.

There has been a transformation in the private rented sector. When the Rent Acts were first introduced 75 years ago, 10 per cent. of our housing stock was held by owner-occupiers and 90 per cent. by the private rented sector. My hon. Friend the Minister has already said that the private rented sector has fallen in those 75 years from 90 to 8 per cent. in 1987.

Mr. John Patten: Is my hon. Friend aware that, such is the loss of units of accommodation and homes in the private rented sector—presently running at 70,000 a year—that, unless we act, within 10 or 15 years there will be no private rented sector left?

Mr. Gow: If there is an increase in owner-occupation—now approaching 64 per cent. in England—it is self-evident that there will be a diminution in renting. We want that figure of 64 per cent. to go on rising. Indeed, I am sure that it will.

I believe that we need a radical policy to bring into use unused and under-used accommodation. We also need a radical policy to attract new investment to the private rented sector. I congratulate the Minister on his announcement of the increase in the number of approved landlords under the assured tenancy scheme. However, the truth is that, apart from that scheme, there is practically nobody in Britain building houses or flats for renting in the private sector.

Mr. Winnick: It has been the same for 30 years.

Mr. Gow: Exactly. The hon. Gentleman and I agree. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) made a start with assured tenancies, and my hon. Friend the Minister is continuing that good work.

In respect of all new lettings, I believe that the rent to be paid by the tenant should be that rent that is agreed between tenant and landlord.

Mr. Winnick: Freely negotiated.

Mr. Gow: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is correct. If the landlord asks too high a rent, he will not get a tenant. That practice would bring more accommodation into use.

In respect of all future lettings, I believe that the terms of the tenancy should be those agreed between the landlord and tenant. In our future policies for lettings there should be no place for the rent officer, and no place for the tenant to have the right to extend the terms of his tenancy beyond that term agreed between himself and landlord.

The tragedy of the Rent Acts is that they have injured the people whom they were designed to protect. We have succeeded in drying up the supply of privately rented accommodation, to the great injury of potential tenants. That has meant a great loss of housing for our people. I believe that the radical poliy that I have suggested would, in the medium term, reduce rents in many parts of the country. *[Interruption.]* It is quite extraordinary how the Opposition have still not learnt elementary economics. If one increases the supply of eggs, the price of eggs will diminish. If the supply of privately rented accommodation is increased, rents will come down.

The Labour party believes that the moment one removes price controls there is a price rise. Some Opposition Members still do not accept that the free market is able to provide a better service to our people than is provided by the controls so beloved by the Opposition. I hope that my hon. Friend will have the courage to include in our manifesto radical proposals for the encouragement and revival of the private rented sector.

6.34 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): In many ways we have heard a rather depressing debate this afternoon. We have heard the backward attitudes of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), a former Minister for Housing, whose comments have gone a long way to explain his abject failure in office.

We have also heard the sensitive comments of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) who advocated a scheme that was put to him by me—in a former guise before elected to the House—and others some two years ago when he was a Minister. Sadly, his sensitive approach towards this issue probably led to his departure from the present Government. He is now advocating a scheme that could have been put into practice two years ago if the Government had had the will to do so. We have heard the Minister's comments. He has presided over one of the most appalling housing crises since the war and he displayed insensitivity, complacency and arrogance that would make most people feel depressed.

Any Minister who has witnessed this record rise in homelessness, together with the scandal of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, should come to the House with a touch of humility and a willingness to admit that things are not all that they should be. Instead, we have been treated to arrogance, insensitivity and complacency of an extraordinary scale.

We now have the worst figures for homelessness since records began in 1947. It is ironic that, in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, we have the worst homeless figure since records began. We also have the worst figures yet recorded for bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That accommodation represents squalid, overcrowded conditions, imposing on families circumstances that destroy family life. Those conditions have

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been achieved at an appalling financial and human cost. It is costing the Government more to keep families in bed-and-breakfast squalor than to build new homes. Such are the policies of the loony Right who govern our country at the moment. The Government are squandering money on keeping people in squalid hovels rather than building the homes that they need. What a disgraceful record. Any Minister worth his salt would apologise for that this afternoon, rather than hardly mentioning the issue of bed and breakfast.

The Minister should not express surprise about the increase in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It is not something that has mysteriously emerged, for no apparent reason. Bed-and-breakfast accommodation fills a gap left by the lack of an adequate house building programme and the lack of adequate homes available to rent. In a time of shortage, the private sector — beloved of the Conservatives — moves in to make a killing. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) should consider what life would be like were the Tories to change the Rent Acts to remove all controls on new lettings and thus allow such lettings to be freely negotiated.

There are freely negotiated conditions of occupation for bed-and-breakfast accommodation. A landlord buys a property, but will not let it on decent terms, and states that he will take homeless people. He will charge the earth for squalid conditions. Such are the freely negotiated conditions that are presently being imposed by exploitative landlords. The Conservatives, to their eternal discredit, subsidise this exercise to a massive extent through the Department of Health and Social Security. They are subsidising those landlords who keep people in squalor rather than providing the necessary homes for people in need. Such is the basic economics that the hon. Member for Eastbourne should consider. It is the basic economics of exploitation — when the opportunity is available, in times of shortage, the private sector is rapacious.

The Minister has given excuses for the present problems. He has discussed empty properties and once again has shown extraordinary hypocrisy. He turned his attack on local authorities for leaving properties empty. I join him in condemning those authorities, including Wandsworth, which leave masses of properties empty in order to sell them. Such properties are needlessly empty. However, I also condemn those Government Departments that have empty properties. The percentage of empty properties owned by Government Departments is far greater than those owned by any local authority. Government Department empties are 6·5 per cent. of their lettings.

What is the Minister of Housing doing about that? Is he talking to his right hon. and hon. Friends and urging them to bring those properties into use? Has he talked to the Home Secretary about the 18 per cent. of Metropolitan police residential accommodation in London that is currently vacant? What about that scandal of empty property? Why are some of those homes not being used for the homeless? Why is nothing being done about those? The Minister is simply playing party politics in order to make cheap attacks on local authorities, but he will not apply the same logic to his own hon. Friends who have far more empty residential properties in their Departments. That is hypocrisy, and the Minister knows it.

The Minister knows that there is support in principle, on the Opposition side as well as on the Government side, for assured tenancies. He knows very well that this is only a small-scale operation and not a replacement for mainstream programmes. That is the tragedy of the Government's present policy. They are fiddling with palliatives and talking about small-scale schemes rather than providing mainstream programmes.

The Government cry crocodile tears about the housing association movement, but they ought to be reminded of their record. In 1979, housing associations completed just over 16,000 lettings for people in need in England. That was the record that the Government inherited from the Labour Government. In the last 12 months, housing associations completed only 9,000 homes for letting. The Government like to be seen as a friend of the housing association movement but they have cut the housing associations' programme and associations that are desperately keen to provide rented homes for people in need are being prevented from doing so by Government policies. The Government are fiddling rather than dealing with the mainstream needs of our time. It is certainly not good enough for the Government to hide behind such palliatives.

The Government's talk about the right to rent is perhaps the greatest hypocrisy of all. In the eight years during which they have been responsible for housing policy, they have presided over the worst ever decline in rented housing in Britain. Some 1 million homes for rent have gone from the market. About half of those were in the private rented sector and the other half were council homes. That is the legacy of this Government. Never before has there been such a loss of rented accommodation in so short a period. That is the record of the Government and therein lies the explanation for the alarming rise in homelessness and the bed-and-breakfast crisis.

The shortage of rented housing needs to be tackled. The two parties that will fight the forthcoming election will put fundamentally different policies to the electorate. We will put policies of hope about building homes for people in need and the Conservatives will put a record of failure, disaster, homelessness and misery. On that record, the Government will be judged and found wanting.

6.43 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): I should like quickly to make a few points. My first is about the importance of improving the quality of housing estates like those in my constituency. We all know that there is a shortage of decent homes. There always has been and there always will be. This is primarily because expectations always exceed demand. However, building more council houses is not the whole answer. That results in large council estates, and we have found by painful experience that such estates are difficult to manage.

We need smaller estates, either privately owned or in management, and the management should be carried out by housing associations or by tenants themselves. I believe in that concept primarily because it leads to greater involvement by those who live on the estates. We all know that, when people occupy their own houses and are involved in the running of their estates, that results in a cleaner, better and tidier estate. In Nottingham, my party is advocating for the local elections greater local

management in the running of the council estates. We should not fear going beyond that and should ask tenants how they want their estates to be managed.

Anyone who takes an interest in housing will be aware of the Thamesmead experiment, in which tenants were asked whether they wanted to be run by Greenwich borough council or by a local trust. They voted to be run by a local trust. We should break up the large estates, give their tenants more choice, and encourage more localised management.

My second point is about the need to deregulate the private rented sector. In Nottingham, both private and council houses are very cheap—indeed, it is almost as cheap to buy as to rent—but buying does not suit everybody. Britain needs mobility of labour. People going from the north to the south can get jobs but they cannot find somewhere to live. But it is not just that; people going from the north to the midlands have the same problem, and it affects young people who may not be high on a council's waiting list and have difficulty in finding somewhere to live.

I am pleased to see that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has just returned to the Chamber. He said that, in the short term, rents may go up. However, as more property comes on to the market, rents will begin to drop, we will see them coming down to an acceptable level and more property will be available. It is important that we have adequate protection for the tenants in order to prevent the harassment and the Rachmanism that used to go on.

My final point is that, in improving the quality of existing stock, we must look at estates such as those in Nottingham on which there are pre-war and post-war houses. They are largely unmodernised. Some of them still have outside toilets, and modernisation is slow. I complained to the local authority about this and it said that it was short of funds. If I were a councillor and the local Tory MP complained to me, that is what I would say to him. However, we see there the hypocrisy that I spoke about in my intervention, because while complaining that is has a shortage of funds, the council is relocating its housing services department in a brand new luxury block of flats which cost £2·5 million.

I have no objection to such relocation, but to do it the council is taking £1·8 million out of the housing investment programme. Some £1·4 million of that was targeted for a housing association in Nottingham, but it will not now receive that money. A further £400,000 is being taken from housing receipts.

I do not mind the council complaining to me about a shortage of funds, but I object to the approach of offices before homes, at the same time as the Opposition Front Bench spokesman complains that the Government are not giving the councils more money. We are hearing the smooth words of the Opposition spokesman and they are covering up for the iron fist of the activists in the country. The Opposition motion is hypocritical and I ask all hon. Members to resist it.

6.48 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): In debates over the last few months, I have listened with interest to the Minister and I have read some of the articles that he has had published about the emerging consensus about housing that exists in the House. I concede that, in terms of some ideas, there is an emerging consensus and to some extent that is welcome. In this debate we have heard a catalogue of problems for which no resolution seems to be in sight. It is questionable whether the emerging consensus of ideas is a consensus of action. We need a consensus of ideas that leads to action.

I shall not talk about homelessness or waiting lists, because those things have been well covered. One of the issues to which we must address our minds if we are to build up such a consensus is what to do about mortgage tax relief. We must ask ourselves what purpose it serves and how it can be used as an instrument of housing policy. The Minister quoted from today's leader in *The Daily Telegraph*. He omitted to quote from the leader a section that dealt with this very question. Speaking about the results of housing mortgage tax relief, the editorial said:

> "This expression of sturdy individualism has been encouraged by mortgage tax relief; but the latter has had the unintended effect of driving up house prices and so, in the long run, the proportion of the nation's wealth invested in bricks and mortar, as opposed to more productive options."

Clearly I am not going to try to work out the solutions to that problem in my contribution this afternoon, but we have to address it. The Minister was perhaps a little disingenuous in quoting only part of that leader.

In the time that is available to me, I want to discuss one type of housing provision which needs more attention and support. If we are to expand rented housing—I think there is a consensus that that needs to be done—how do we do so without repeating the mistakes of the past? A major part of the answer to that question is to involve the prospective tenants in the construction, design and thinking about housing. One way of doing that which I have been involved in that I think needs greater attention is the use of new build housing co-operatives that give people a say in where they live, the layout of the estate, the internal design of the houses and, more importantly, how those houses are managed and maintained.

For some years I was fortunate to work in the housing co-operative movement on Merseyside. My conclusion is that, with motivation, in many respects these schemes are visibly better than other forms of rented housing and some forms of owner-occupied housing. The results of tenants in co-operative control warrant some thought and attention.

At the moment on Merseyside there are some 24 new build housing co-operatives, and a further six which will be municipalised. I am pleased that some eight of those new build co-operatives are in my constituency. New build co-operatives prove that ordinary people — 800 on Merseyside—when given the opportunity, are capable of taking control of their housing and making a good job of it. They can control the development process and do something useful with it. It also shows that ordinary people can use professionals in a way that enriches their own lives and produces better schemes. The results are visibly better than other types of schemes both in overall effect and in detail.

It is important that housing co-operatives are essentially, although not always, a local phenomenon. They tend to use local sites, providing hope to the area and a demonstrable belief in the area that is important. That also has important local consequences. It is quite a sight to see the Southdene or Cherryfield housing co-operatives in my constituency. They took over demolition sites and

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new houses have sprouted like the phoenix from the ashes. In this local context, it is important that it keeps communities together and cements them.

Another important point in the community context is that the skills that ordinary people develop while working in those schemes can be used to do other things. A small but important example is that there are several members of the Southdene housing co-operative in my constituency who, by employing those same skills, have formed the Southdene credit union. Those people have drawn the same sorts of conclusions about local control. Many other initiatives can spin off from housing co-operatives.

I began by talking about the emerging consensus in housing. It is small, embryonic and tentative, and I do believe it is yet complete. But if we are not to repeat the mistakes we made in the past with rented houses, housing co-operatives should form a mainstream part of that consensus. It is the logical consequence of the involvement of tenants. It delivers good housing through co-operatives and it strengthens and controls local communities.

There are many more things that I could say on the subject and had planned to, but time does not permit. The Government must recognise that, if they want the co-operative system to do a job for them, in turn they have to do a job for the co-operative movement.

6.54 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is a shame that this is such a short debate, because housing is the issue that affects people most. The speeches by the Minister and the former Minister were an absolute disgrace in complacency, especially the assumption that market forces will solve the housing problem. If that is so, why is it that there are record numbers of homeless people? Why is it that tonight, as on every night of the year, people will be sleeping under the national theatre, in Covent Garden, around the tube stations in London and alongside the main roads? The Government, in their obsession with market forces and the triumph of the rich over the poor, are creating a hobo society. That is all they are trying to do with their housing policies.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Corbyn: No, I will not give way.

My own borough suffers from the contrasts of the type of society that the Government would like to create—the very expensive privately developed properties, often badly developed and badly built by incompetent property developers. Contrast that with the problems faced by the council in my borough. On the general waiting list of Islington council are some 9,500 people, of which 80 per cent. require bed-sit or one-bedroom accommodation. There are 10,000 people on the housing transfer list, mainly those who require family accommodation.

Those people who come to see me, councillors or my colleague the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) know perfectly well that the policy of sale of council houses means that the possibility of elderly people or families with small children moving out of tower blocks is very limited. Yet the Government have the arrogance to talk about housing choice. There is no choice for those people.

The Government also talk about homelessness. In 1986, 2,812 people applied to my borough council as homeless people. Of those, 887 were single people, many of them extremely vulnerable. No answer for those people has come from the Tory Government or the Tory party in the past, none come now or will come in the coming election. They know it full well.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Try the Rent Acts.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman says, "Try the Rent Acts." Speaker after speaker from the Tory Benches proposed freedom for landlords to exploit people to the nth degree. They are proposing a return to Rachmanism. They are proposing all the horrors of the Rent Act 1957: nothing but homelessness and exploitation for the unemployed, the poor and the homeless.

I also want to talk about the house-building costs that the Government impose on local authorities. To build a four-bedroomed two-person property in my borough costs approximately £52,000. If one adds to that the gross debt charges over 30 years that the council has to incur, we are talking of a cost of over £150,000 for that property. If the Government are serious about getting council houses built—I very much doubt that they are—they should look at the debts forced on local authorities by the system of local authority finance.

The Government say they are concerned about housing, so I will give a couple of figures about the housing investment programme bid and the amount allocated to the borough of Islington to deal with its housing problem. In 1980-81, the council bid £60 million and was granted £47 million, or 79 per cent. of the bid. In 1983 it was granted the same percentage. In 1985-86, the council bid £81 million and was allocated £29 million. For the current year it has been allocated only 24 per cent. of its bid. The Government have the impertinence to describe the council as not meeting the housing needs of the people of the borough. It is they who are responsible for policy towards local government and for the levels of homelessness in this country.

The investment bid application for 1987-88 stated:

"Islington's housing is dominated by two contrasting realities. On the one side, there are the Council's attempts to maintain, improve and expand the housing stock in its ownership. This is an over-riding priority if Islington is to meet the ever-increasing and desperate demand for decent homes from existing tenants".

That is quite correct. It is good stuff and it is correctly put. Then I look at the property pages of the local newspaper. I listen to what the Tory party says about the choice of housing and the choice of buying. An example on one of those property pages is a newly converted top floor, one-bedroom flat in Bryantwood road N.7, which is offered at £55,000. On the second page of the paper, a former council house in the borough of Haringey sold under the right to buy is now on sale for £86,000. That is way beyond the reach of people in housing need.

In London, £45 million is being spent this year on bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless — the very people who are now being expelled from those bed-and-breakfast hotels to make way for the tourist season. This night and every night, people will continue to sleep on the streets. The police will threaten street sleepers with the Public Order Act 1986, telling them they must move out of the way because they look untidy. I wish that the House could be lobbied by all those people who are completely homeless. The complacency and arrogant

smug smile of the Minister would be removed by the sight of those people demanding their rights: a roof over their heads.

7.1 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): As we say in our motion, the supply of good quality, affordable housing is one of the indispensable conditions for a full, happy and healthy life. That is as true for the old-age pensioner looking for decent sheltered accommodation as it is for a young child growing up and taking his first opportunities in life. That understanding of a basic need is endorsed by all the organisations that subscribe to most of the motion before the House, from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. It is a proposition endorsed by almost everybody in the country, apart from the people who occupy the Conservative Benches. By their words and actions, they have demonstrated that they regard the Government and their agencies as no longer being involved, except in the margins, in the provision of housing accommodation generally for the people of this country. That policy was announced by the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkins), when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, to the Housing Consultative Council when he said that it should concentrate on the provision of housing only for people in special need.

Every Government since the war, and many before the war, accepted the general duty of the state to provide and encourage housing of good quality—except this one. The facts, as well as the words, speak for themselves. For instance, in 1978-79, local authorities spent a modest 0·63 per cent. of gross domestic product on providing new council housing to rent. Yet under this Government, by 1985-86 the same authorities had been reduced to spending a miserable 0·16 per cent. of GDP on new investment in housing. An almost imperceptible part of the wealth of the country is devoted to people in housing need.

Last year, the number of homes built to rent for people in need was the lowest peacetime figure since 1924. It was the lowest figure since John Wheatley was Minister of Housing. Just to emphasise the switch in philosophy on housing among the Conservative party, one can put the figures another way. Last year, the Government built one house for every 10 council homes provided by Harold Macmillan when he was Minister of Housing and Local Government. In 1978, the last full year of Labour government, we were completing about 2,500 council homes for rent every week. By 1986 that number, under restrictions of subsidy and capital expenditure, had fallen to 600 a week.

What we got from the Minister was the Tory housing GT model. I call it the GT model because it is just gimmicks and tokens. For the loss of almost 2,000 homes a week to rent—100,000 homes a year—we have had talk of a right to rent. But when the Minister talks about a right to rent, he is talking about a fantasy, using a phrase he stole from the Labour housing group. The Government have had eight years in office, but what are the achievements of the new initiatives?

The Minister talked about the number of organisations that could build homes for assured tenancies. We have not been against assured tenancies, but I have to tell the Minister and the House that the Government have provided an average of about two homes per week under the assured tenancy scheme—enough to count on two fingers—to try to make up for the loss of 2,000 homes a week as a result of cuts in public expenditure and restrictions on local authorities. Quite deliberately, through the withdrawal of subsidy, the amount of housing available to rent has been reduced. It is no answer to tell those people that they can either go out and buy or look for housing on the private market.

The Labour party supports the desire and the right of people to own their own homes. We always have done and we always will. However, for some people—about one third of our population—that will never be practical or possible, particularly for the 3 million people on the dole. Those people are equally entitled to housing of good quality.

Our charge against the Government is not just that they have failed to discharge their duty to provide housing; it is even more serious. They no longer regard themselves as having a general duty to house at all. That was certainly confirmed by the Minister this afternoon.

That dereliction of duty led to 100,000 families being accepted as homeless in 1986. It led to 275,000 families applying to be treated as homeless last year. In our capital city and booming financial centre it has led to a contrast in housing standards that is more akin to the big cities of Latin America than to the London we love.

Penthouses are selling on the River Thames for figures measured in millions of pounds, but 25,000 people in London have to live rough or in grossly unsatisfactory accommodation. Sometimes they have river accommodation as well but it is usually a cardboard box or a bench. That is the contrast that has been brought about. In London, it has led to 6,000 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation nightly at a cost of £26 million a year. That is enough to pay the running, maintenance and building costs of 5,000 new homes. That is a policy of sheer economic lunacy, as well as inhumanity.

If one wants to glimpse Tory housing policy for those in need one does not need to look any further in London than Westminster city council—the Tories' aristocratic jewel of local authorities—and to those who operate the policy of the lunatic raving Right. On the Elgin and Walterton estates in Westminster, there are 700 council homes for rent, in an area of acute shortage of housing to rent. Yesterday I met Mr. William Rae. He is aged 83 and has lived on that estate for over 50 years. For 48 of those years, he lived at 50, Walterton road, first as tenant of a private landlord but later with the council as his landlord. Not many years ago, he moved to another property in the same road, just a few doors away. He now faces eviction by Westminster city council as a direct result of central Tory housing policy, carried on by the enthusiastic practitioners in Westminster.

Mr. Rae has been told that 150 council tenants will be evicted from the Walterton estate into other accommodation so that their homes can be sold to the private sector. On the Elgin estate, about 100 people will be dealt with in a similar way. People such as Mr. Rae, who fought in two world wars, will be forced to move out of their homes to make way for private development. In the city of Westminster, where the sale of bedsits is booming, those council homes could be sold for about £70,000 for bedsits and about £87,000 for single-bedroom accommodation.

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Never again in Westminster, in the centre of the bed-and-breakfast industry, will people be able to rent at affordable prices. As a result of Tory policies, those homes will be lost for ever and the need for housing will increase in London.

The reason is that the raving Right of Westminster are carrying out the raving policies of Whitehall, although Westminster has the capital receipts which have been frozen. It has been forced to cannibalise its council accommodation in order to keep it going. Mr. Rae, this 83-year-old gentleman who would like to stay where he is, went to a Westminster council meeting to protest. One of the leading Tory councillors on Westminster council described Mr. Rae as "one of a ragbag of extremists". His extremism is that he fought in two world wars and he has lived in the same road for almost half a century. He likes living there, he likes his neighbours and the close-knit community; but to the lunatic Right of the Westminster city council he is apparently an extremist.

Mr. Rae, at the age of 83, does not want to exercise the right of which the Government amendment speaks, to buy his own home. If Mr. Rae wants to stay put and fight against the Tory council in Westminster and not exercise his right to buy, the committee of Westminster city council has got him. At the meeting to which Mr. Rae went, the committee approved the following resolution:

"That proceedings for recovery of possession be taken where necessary in respect of tenants on the Walterton and Elgin estates submitting right-to-buy applications after 1 April 1987 in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of this report."

The ultimate in Tory housing policy is that, in the centre of a city where people are clamouring for homes to rent or buy at prices that they can afford, in a city where bed-and-breakfast hotels are booming, where people sleep in cardboard boxes, Westminster city council, in the central stream of Tory housing policy — the policy of privatisation—is about to evict 250 tenants to sell off parts of its estates in order to keep the council going, not to provide affordable housing, but to raise the money to maintain the rest of the estate.

We in the Labour party say that the party which believes that the Government should get out of housing is the party that should get out of government.

7.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): The Government welcome an opportunity for debate on housing, because housing is important, at both the local and the national level, and it is only right that it is debated regularly. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction has been listening closely to all that has been said in the debate, as I have, and we shall study closely the points that have been made.

One would imagine, from some of the remarks of Members of the Opposition, that the Government's housing policies would be very unpopular. We had the archetype of that kind of speech from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), but we have become accustomed to hearing that speech from him. As Government Members know, our policies are not unpopular. Our housing policies are very popular; so popular that the Opposition parties, particularly the Labour party, are busy trying to adopt parts of them.

The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) nods. He claimed to have to played a part in the conception of one of our policies. He said that before he came to this House he had had discussions with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). Our policies are popular because the Conservative party believes in giving people the sort of housing that they want, rather than imposing on them some centrally dictated type and tenure of housing.

The main priority over the first years of this Government was to widen the opportunities for home ownership, because that is what most people want, and we have been outstandingly successful. Public sector tenants were given the right to buy their homes, and since 1979 over 1 million council, new town and housing association houses and flats have been sold. I am sure that the electors will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne for pointing out so clearly this afternoon the policies of the Liberal party, as stated by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), the housing spokesman for the so-called alliance.

A series of low-cost home ownership initiatives have made it possible for more young people to become home owners. Since 1979, 4 million households have become owner-occupied for the first time. About 65 per cent. of dwellings are now owner-occupied, compared with 57 per cent. in 1979 when the Labour party left government.

It would be wrong, as some have done, to represent our housing policies as being concerned exclusively with the promotion of home ownership. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, we have been working hard to improve the lot of the tenant. We have developed, and recently extended, the concept of assured tenancies. New mechanisms have been devised to allow much greater input of private sector resources into the public sector. In the Housing Act 1980, the Government introduced the first statutory charter of rights for public sector tenants. Through the priority estates project and Estate Action we have encouraged improved local management of tenanted estates. We intend to go further.

The Housing and Planning Act 1986, which I was pleased to pilot through the House with my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Construction, encouraged further innovations in forms of tenure and management. The hon. Member for Fulham talked about housing associations, which the Government rate very highly. The Government have provided resources in 1987-88 to allow for 22,000 new association houses to be rented or bought.

Many Labour Members have talked about the problems of homelessness. I should correct two common misconceptions about homelessness. The first is that the much-quoted figure of over 100,000 households with no roofs over their heads is not correct. Those people have been accepted by local authorities under the homeless persons legislation and they have been housed mostly in permanent accommodation.

The second misconception is that the rise in the number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities is a direct result of cuts in public sector resources. That is certainly not true. The causes of homelessness are complex. It has to do with the supply of housing, especially the decline of private renting, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne said today, as he has on many other occasions.

Private renting flourishes in every other part of the free world, helping the homeless, as much as the young and the job seeker. Homelessness is the extreme development of

the monopoly of public housing, which inevitably creates —*[Interruption.]* I advise Opposition Members to listen and they might learn—rationing and queues.

But the reasons for homelessness go wider than that. It has much to do with social factors, such as the increasing incidence of divorce. Britain has the highest divorce rate in Europe, except for Denmark. Young people are leaving home earlier. Today's patterns of migration and the general loosening of the structure and cohesion of family life are also causes. *[Interruption.]*

The Opposition may dispute my reasons for homelessness, but the fact that homelessness is caused by social factors does not mean that the Government have any intention of washing their hands of the consequences. We have launched a major study by the University of Birmingham's centre for urban and regional studies. We need to improve our information about the homeless if we are to deal seriously with the problem.

The supply of housing in Britain has increased significantly. Since 1979 the total number of dwellings in England has increased by 7·5 per cent., from 17·5 million to 18·9 million. Private sector house building completions in England in 1986 were 142,000, the highest level since 1973, when, incidentally, we last had a Conservative Government.

We recognise that the overall increase in supply does not mean that there are not shortages of particular types of accommodation in some areas, but those shortages could be eased drastically if better use were made of existing dwellings in the public and private sectors.

I commend to the House what has been said this afternoon by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton. He talked about monitoring schemes being run by the London borough of Bromley and others. Under those schemes tenants may receive cash to help them to buy a home in the private sector and so create a vacancy for the council. I am happy to tell the House that the Department has commissioned research into that matter which is progressing well, but it is a little early to give its initial results.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) talked about the anomalies that seem to exist in the account given by various boroughs of empty dwellings. Local authorities are asked to provide details of their empty council dwellings on their housing investment programme submissions. They are asked to show those that are vacant for more than six months, one year or two years. This year we shall ask local authorities to show separately their squatted dwellings, and that should help to resolve the problem that was identified so clearly and graphically, particularly in the London borough of Lambeth, by my hon. Friend.

This afternoon we have heard something about the condition of the housing stock. This was raised at an early stage by the hon. Member for Leeds, West. Over recent years we have recognised that more money needed to be spent on maintaining the existing housing stock, and more money is being spent. Spending on home improvement grants, although lower than in 1983 and 1984, was still £400 million last year, about five times the level of the last year of the previous Labour Administration. Let us not forget that that was also the year when the Liberal party kept the Labour Government in power.

Total expenditure on maintaining the private sector stock is running at about £10,000 million a year. Similarly, local authorities are, rightly, spending more of their resources on the repair and maintenance of their stock — over £2·5 billion out of capital and revenue in 1985-86. The number of local authority and new town dwellings renovated each year has increased by 120 per cent. since 1978, to 135,000 in 1986.

As is inevitable in a housing debate, we have heard complaints from the Opposition of cuts in public sector resources on housing, particularly resources for capital investment. Let me draw attention to the local authority areas of three hon. Members who have spoken. I must point out to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) that 18 per cent. arrears of the rent roll exists in the borough of Islington—£6·17 million. Let us hear no more about a lack of resources from him.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) talked of a lack of resources. In Liverpool the arrears amount to 13 per cent. of the rent roll—£7·67 million—and 11 per cent. of the housing stock is unoccupied. The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said that his authority was short of resources, but Manchester is 9 per cent. in arrears on its rent roll.

This has been an interesting debate. There is clearly a measure of agreement between us and some Opposition Members on some issues, but on others there is no meeting of minds. We do not underestimate the problems that exist, but our policies are designed to create a housing market with real choices in all sectors, to make the most effective use of public sector funds and to unlock the huge resources in the private sector. That is the best way forward. I commend to the House the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 179, Noes 240.

Division No. 147] **[7.28 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Alton, David	Cohen, Harry
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Conlan, Bernard
Ashdown, Paddy	Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Corbett, Robin
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary	Corbyn, Jeremy
Barron, Kevin	Craigen, J. M.
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Crowther, Stan
Bell, Stuart	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cunningham, Dr John
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Dalyell, Tam
Bermingham, Gerald	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Blair, Anthony	Deakins, Eric
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Dewar, Donald
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Dixon, Donald
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Dobson, Frank
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Dormand, Jack
Bruce, Malcolm	Douglas, Dick
Buchan, Norman	Dubs, Alfred
Caborn, Richard	Duffy, A. E. P.
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Eadie, Alex
Campbell, Ian	Eastham, Ken
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Canavan, Dennis	Fatchett, Derek
Carlile, Alexander *(Monig'y)*	Faulds, Andrew
Carter-Jones, Lewis	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Cartwright, John	Fisher, Mark
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Flannery, Martin
Clarke, Thomas	Forrester, John
Clay, Robert	Foster, Derek
Clelland, David Gordon	Foulkes, George
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*

George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamble, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rayneford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rosel, Sir Hugh
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*

Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*	Waldegrave, Hon William
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*	Wall, Sir Patrick
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*	Waller, Gary
Stradling Thomas, Sir John	Walters, Dennis
Sumberg, David	Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter	Watson, John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*	Watts, John
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter	Wells, Bowen *(Hartford)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*	Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*	Whitfield, John
Thornton, Malcolm	Winterton, Mrs Ann
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*	Winterton, Nicholas
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*	Wolfson, Mark
Tracey, Richard	Woodcock, Michael
Trippier, David	Yeo, Tim
Trotter, Neville	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Twinn, Dr Ian	Younger, Rt Hon George
van Straubenzee, Sir W.	
Vaughan, Sir Gerard	Tellers for the Noes:
Waddington, Rt Hon David	Mr. Tony Durant and
Wakeham, Rt Hon John	Mr. Richard Ryder.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House believes that as many households as possible should have the opportunity to benefit from owning their own home and that for those who are unable to buy or who do not wish to do so there should be a real choice of rented housing both in terms of type and location of dwelling and of landlord; and congratulates Her Majesty's Government for pursuing policies which give people not only the housing they need, but also the housing they want.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): We now come to the second motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I have to announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has not selected the amendment.

7.41 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the proposed privatisation of Rolls-Royce and the way in which it would be sold off at well below its proper value; and believes that the company should remain in public ownership in order to secure British ownership, adequate capital investment, research and development, and job security, as well as a proper return for the taxpayer on the massive public investment which, together with the commitment of all its employees, secured the recovery of a company which is crucial to this country's aerospace and engineering industries.

May I first observe that this is a debate that should have taken place in Government time. The proposal to privatise Rolls-Royce comes from the Government, and the Government alone. Were it not for a technical matter, the way in which Rolls-Royce was taken into the public sector, they would in other circumstances have had to come here with a piece of legislation and we could have had the adequate and thorough debate that an issue of this importance demands. It is not for want of trying. We have repeatedly approached the Government, insisting that the debate should be held, but all our requests have been turned down. So the duty that properly lay with the Government has on this occasion been accepted by the Labour party. That is why we put the motion down tonight.

Our case is that the proposed privatisation of Rolls-Royce is motivated by dogma, pure and simple. There is no case whatever on grounds of competition or of an industrial, financial or technical kind for privatising Rolls-Royce. It is simply another—yet another—expression of the Government view that all successful enterprises in the public sector must be moved to the private sector. We know that Rolls-Royce has been in the public sector since the tragic collapse in 1971, when it was acquired by a former Conservative Government who, on that occasion at least, rose to their responsibilities. Since then, the company has, as a result of massive public investment, been turned round. It is a major achievement by the company, and I pay tribute to all who work in it for their success in doing this. It now has a turnover of £1·8 billion, and last year it declared profits of £120 million.

Apart from the efforts of everyone who works there, this could not, of course, have been achieved without the very strong and sustained financial support provided by successive Administrations. One would have thought that the sensible thing, having reched this period of recovery and being on the verge of years of profitability, would be to keep it in the public sector and to obtain a return for the public on the investment made on its behalf; but that is not what has happened.

It would be instructive just to look for a minute or two at the financial proposals behind the privatisation scheme. We know that the Government supplied equity capital to the extent of £508 million. My right hon. Friend the member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) has been pursuing these matters relentlessly by questions. In an answer that he received from the Minister for Information Technology, the Minister confirmed that, at today's prices, the equity capital was valued at £1,063 million.

[Mr. John Smith]

We know also that because of expenditure on the RB211-22B project £537 million was supplied by the Government, with £334 million recovered. That has been confirmed in correspondence from the Minister. So we know that another £203 million went in on that account. We also know from the pathfinder prospectus that the Government propose effectively to wipe out £283 million by the way in which the shares are to be sold.

Adding that up, we reach a figure well in excess of £1·5 billion. That is without taking into account the substantial amount of money advanced by the Department of Trade and Industry through the advanced engineering programme which, between 1982 and 1986 alone, amounted to £162 million, and the money for development contracts from the Ministry of Defence which, after allowing for repayments over the same small period, amounted to £241 million. So we know that more than £1·5 billion has gone into Rolls-Royce from the public coffers, a figure which, if we take account of launch aid and research and development support, is much nearer £2 billion and may even be higher than that.

Then we look at the prospectus and at the price at which the Government propose to sell the company. They announced the figure this morning. It is likely to raise £1·3 billion. So why on earth are we selling one of Britain's most prestigious companies, in which we have invested probably more than £2 billion, for £1·3 billion? Why are we handing it over, now that it is making a profit of £120 million, and effectively telling those who will purchase it that, although they did not put in any investment over all those years, and although they did not take the risk of turning the company round, we are handing over to them more than £100 million of profit for as far ahead as we can see?

Even worse, we know, again from the prospectus, that there are £600 million-worth of unabsorbed tax losses with the company and that the company will get the benefit of that. So we know that for years ahead the privatised Rolls-Royce will not pay any corporation tax whatever. The more one looks at this, the more one sees that the privatisation of Rolls-Royce is a one-way street — burdens and losses for the taxpayers, profits for the private sector. It is an appalling example of the stewardship of our public funds by the Government.

I note also with alarm that in today's *Evening Standard* one of the brokers for the company at Hoare Govett, Peter Deighton, talking about who would invest in the company, said:

"The public will subscribe in force and the US and Japanese investors are likely to pile in."

It will not be beyond the Government's knowledge that the Japanese are not exactly allowing British investors to "pile in" to take shares in Japanese companies at present.

I can think of no example in the recent history of our public finances when a more irresponsible exercise has been conducted than on this occasion. That is why we argue with force that there is no financial justification whatsoever for this move. There is not even on this occasion the notion of piling up an election fund for the Conservative party.

The matter is, of course, serious because, as we stress in our motion, it is important that British ownership should be secured for one of Britain's most important companies.

No doubt the Secretary of State will say that he has once again produced a golden share in the company's articles of association and that, for the £1 share that he buys, but that he can never use in a voting capacity, he can block any change in the articles of association that might allow foreign ownership to predominate in the company. That is all very well, but it is an untried and untested mechanism. It is one thing to take a power, but another thing to exercise it.

We should consider the way in which the Government behaved over another important aerospace company, Westland, in allowing that company's fate to be decided by people whose interests are, as yet, unknown even to the Government, never mind to the British public or the employees and management of the Westland company. In all probability a concert party took place on that occasion and was designed to manipulate the ownership of the company. Surely we can never contemplate Rolls-Royce being made the victim of such circumstances, or its future being decided by anonymous foreign owners.

Therefore, I ask the Secretary of State to give us categorical assurances about the maintenance of a predominantly British ownership in the company. We know that if the company were to stay in the public sector there would not be a problem about that. We know that it would remain British because we would continue to own it on behalf of the British people. The risk is created only by the privatisation exercise upon which the Government have embarked.

We know also that Rolls-Royce is a crucial national asset. The *Financial Times* recently observed:

"Virtually the whole of the RAF and important elements of the other two services, depend on the company."

Its importance in civil aerospace cannot be overestimated.

One of the difficulties faced by a high technology company such as Rolls-Royce is the enormous cost of modern development. The research and development contribution is necessarily high as the company operates on the frontiers of new technology. We are fortunate to have such an excellent company operating in that way.

However, Rolls-Royce is not a large competitor in a competitive game. The turnover of Rolls-Royce is £1·8 billion, whereas the turnover of General Electric Corporation is $30 billion and that of Pratt and Whitney is $16 billion. Both those companies form parts of large and diversified groups. Therefore, Rolls-Royce always has a difficult time competing against such formidable and well-financed competitors.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. He is quoting slightly misleading figures when he states that the turnover of General Electric Corporation is $30 billion and that of Pratt and Whitney $16 billion. He must know that General Electric Corporation is a large and diversified engineering company and that its engine-making side is only a small part of that. Likewise, United Technology has a turnover of $16 billion, and not Pratt and Whitney.

Mr. Smith: It might help us all if the hon. Gentleman listened to what was said in the Chamber. Just before he got to his feet, I was making the point that General Electric is a large and diversified company. Of course that gives it added economic strength. It can cross-subsidise from one activity to another and can call upon the resources of the entire conglomerate.

As we know, the United States Government make sure that such companies are supported through the Department of Defence. The notion that the United States Government do not involve themselves in subventions to industry is one of the great myths of our time. It is done in a different way. It is not done through a Department of Industry. It is wrapped up in the flag, put in defence appropriation and is then voted through. Throughout the entire aerospace industry, never mind the aero-engine industry, we know that that happens with large amounts of money. Other countries take care to secure the national interests that are represented by important companies in their economies.

That is why, over the years, Governments have assisted Rolls-Royce with important research and development. That is why we know, again from the prospectus, that the company intends to come back to the Government for more money for research and development. The company will be right to do so.

However, where is such research and development in the private sector? What is the point of privatising a profitable asset if one must meet the bills that it cannot face on its own in the private sector? Why do we not use the profits that we would make from maintaining it in the public sector to finance its research in the future, instead of asking for further subventions from the taxpayer?

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): That is too simple.

Mr. Smith: As my hon. Friend has said, that proposition is probably too simple to be grasped by Conservative Members. If they showed just one glimmering of the sense of propriety that they exhibit in attending to their own personal financial affairs in respect of our public financial affairs, we should make much more progress in this country. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) should not engage in naming those people who have acted improperly when it comes to the acquisition of shares in privatisation exercises. If he selects that as as weapon, he may find that it is a boomerang.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes, but I do not think that it will help.

If I can try to get the debate back to the important issues that we were discussing, the truth is that the future of Rolls-Royce will be dependent upon the City of London. It is not as if we can look at the City of London with any confidence so far as the financing of high technology and long-term projects are concerned. We know that the City is in the grip of a woeful short-termism and that would be wholly inadequate for Rolls-Royce. Indeed, we have seen that British Aerospace has had to come to the Government to ask for launch aid for airbus. We were told that it would be marvellous when British Aerospace was privatised and that there would not be any interference by Ministers. However, we learned something different during the Westland affair, when there seemed to be some odd interference by Ministers. British Aerospace is knocking at the Government's door. However, I am sorry to say that so far it has not received any positive response for the funding of the airbus project. Those projects are so great and demanding in financial terms that they cannot be faced by private sector companies alone.

Why on earth do we want to privatise Rolls-Royce? Why do we put at risk the interests of the company's 160,000 employees? About 160,000 people work in supply industries or for sub-contractors who work in association with Rolls-Royce. They are scattered all round the United Kingdom. There is hardly a part of Britain that will not be affected by the future of Rolls-Royce. From the north of Scotland right down to the south of England, there are factories that make an important contribution to Rolls-Royce efforts. The future of communities all over our country is tied to the future success of the company.

There is planning to be done by the company, but it could be done equally well within the public sector. During the past few years the company has shown that can be done. There is no reason to suppose that that success could not be maintained. Indeed, the notion that somehow there is chronic Government interference has been denied by chairman after chairman of the company. However, if the company stays in the public sector we know, purely and simply, that it will not risk another collapse such as happened in 1971. Many people still working in the company remember that dreadful day, when it looked not only as if their jobs would go but as if one of Britain's crucial industries would disappear. If that had been allowed to happen, what an episode of criminal neglect that would have been.

We know that the private sector was totally incapable of rescuing the company when it was in that position. The company needed public sector intervention. That public sector intervention probably went against the grain of the Conservative Government of the day but, to their credit, they knew that in the national interest they had to do that.

Mr. Dave Nellis (Coventry, South-East): I was one of those who worked for the company—at least, I attended the Rolls-Royce technical college — on that day in February 1971 when it collapsed because of the overstretching of the financing of the RB211 project. Is it not a fact that, despite the complacency of Government spokesmen and Tory Back Benchers, the stretching on the Superfan of $3,000 million, the problems of the V2500 engine, the loss of the A340 airbus contract, together with Rolls-Royce in the private sector could mean the same thing happening again on the same scale as at the beginning of 1971, with 200,000 workers finding their jobs at risk?

Mr. Smith: I know that my hon. Friend, not only on the basis of his personal experience, but also because he represents many people who work in the company, is expressing a deeply held fear that is felt through many parts of the company. There is little else but apprehension about what lies ahead for the company because such people know that crucial research and development and capital investment is totally dependent on what one can only call the caprice of the City of London.

We also know that the management of the company will inevitably always have to look over its shoulder at the reactions and interests of the City of London.

Under public ownership, with the Government backing the company through to success, the management and workers can get on with the crucial job of ensuring that Rolls-Royce remains a world leader. Why must we add this complication, knowing the way in which the City behaves on these occasions?

For research and development, capital investment and for maintaining Rolls-Royce in its position of excellence in the world there is every reason to keep it in the public

[Mr. Smith]

sector and none for privatisation. That is why we argue the importance of public sector participation and why after the general election we shall secure a strategic public stake in Rolls-Royce so that the public interest can be maintained. *[Interruption.]*

The reaction displayed by Conservative Members shows an overweening confidence on their part about a decision which the electorate has yet to make. The look on some of their faces will change when they see the results coming in. Indeed, I hope their look will change. This will be an important issue in the general election campaign and some of them will be called to account for the votes that they cast at the end of this debate.

This is nothing more or less than a scandalous exercise which betrays all the chronic weaknesses of the Government. First, it shows their desire to mix public obligation and private profit in ways which always favour private profit. Secondly, it shows a failure to appreciate the vital role of Government in high technology industries and a belief that responsibility for our industrial future, let alone our defence needs, can be shuffled off on to some shoulders other than those of the Government. Thirdly, it displays the narrow dogmatic prejudice that lies behind most of the privatisations, but which in this case can be uniquely demonstrated to rest on dogma alone.

That is why we shall vote with conviction for our motion tonight. If for one moment hon. Members in other parties were to allow a glimpse of the national interest to peek through their dogmatic prejudice, they should in all honesty join us in the Lobby tonight.

8.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): The Opposition's motion is wrong on virtually every count. I note that the motion which states that Rolls-Royce is being sold off at well below its proper value was tabled before the Opposition knew the price at which the shares were on offer. That is all too typical of the way in which the Opposition do not let facts get in the way of their prejudices and over the years we have learnt to accept it. The amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is not much better.

The House will be aware of the constraints under which I and other Ministers are placed during the run-up to privatisation. As owners of the shares to be sold, the Government may make no predictions or forecasts about the future of the company or the issue. Therefore, I intend to restrict my remarks purely to the facts.

Rolls-Royce has a special place in British industry. It is a symbol of excellence and, more than that, a symbol of British excellence. The name itself has a unique place in the British manufacturing tradition and it is recognised the world over. *[Interruption.]* Whatever the differences may be between the two sides of the House, it must at least be common ground that we wish the employees and all those who work in Rolls-Royce a successful and prosperous future.

Rolls-Royce is not only a company with a proud tradition, but one with a strong presence and a future full of opportunities. It competes extensively in world markets —270 of the world airlines use its engines, as do more than 110 of the world's defence forces. It employs 42,000 people throughout the world and helps secure the employment of many thousands more through its suppliers. Rolls-Royce is also a profitable company. In 1984, it made pre-tax profits of £26 million, in 1985 the figure was £81 million and in 1986 it made record profits of £120 million.

Since 1973, the company has operated on the basis of assurances that the Government would meet its debts in the extremely unlikely event of liquidation. As part of the arrangements for the sale, the company will receive an injection of new capital amounting to £283 million, a major proportion of which will be used to repay most of the company's borrowings. The prospectus notes that the board considers that, taking into account available facilities and the injection of new capital, the company will have sufficient working capital to meet present requirements. The Government assurances referred to will thus be withdrawn on completion of the offer for sale.

I cannot make any predictions tonight for the future. Investors must make up their own minds, based on the prospectus issued today, whether they wish to invest in the company; I am not allowed to, and must not, say anything which would suggest anything other than that investors read the prospectus carefully before making their decision. However, I can say that the Government are confident that there will be considerable interest in the shares, both from institutional investors and the general public.

Mr. Nellist: Parasites.

Mr. Channon: More than 500,000 members of the public—I do not imagine that all of them are parasites —have registered with the share information office and both the directors of the company and the Government——

Mr. Nellist: People who live off other people's work.

Mr. Channon: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman keeps interrupting on this point. I am talking about 500,000 members of the general public who have registered their interest in the issue with the share information office. Both the directors of the company and the Government welcome its return to the private sector.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has already made several criticisms of the Government's privatisation programme, but he has not spoken of the advantages of privatisation and why we believe that to date the privatisation programme has been a great success.

When the Conservative Government first came to power in 1979, state-owned industries accounted for about one tenth of the United Kingdom's gross national product. they dominated the transport, energy, communications, steel and shipbuilding sectors of the economy. But the Government have now sold about one third of those businesses, including, with Rolls-Royce, 15 major companies. More than 600,000 jobs have been transferred to the private sector and following the sale of Rolls-Royce and later this year the BAA, the state-owned sector of industry will have been cut by about 40 per cent.

There are two main lessons from this programme of privatisation. First, privatisation has enabled large numbers of people who had never previously owned shares to hold shares in British industry and for a great number to hold shares in the company in which they work. Instead of public ownership, which in practice means ownership by a Minister and control by bureaucrats, we have ownership by many thousands of private investors.

Mr. Nellist: Parasites.

Mr. Channon: Moreover, despite the claims of Opposition Members about industrial democracy, which has too often meant democracy for a small number of trade unions, many thousands of people have experienced real industrial democracy through a direct stake in the company for which they work.

Secondly, the experience to date has been for privatisation to be of direct benefit to the companies concerned. There is no great secret about why that should be the case. For far too long, too many of our key companies have had their operating flexibility constrained by Government ownership. They have had to refer investment decisions to Government to justify their plans and proposals to Ministers and officials, and on occasion they have faced the conflict between commercial decisions and transient Government policies.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): If the Government wish to encourage wider share ownership in this particular case, why has not greater incentive been given to smaller investors, as was done in other cases?

Mr. Channon: I shall deal with that in a moment. I note with astonishment that the alliance thinks that the company should not be privatised and that the Government should retain a 51 per cent. holding. We note that policy with considerable interest.

That does not mean that some companies have not been successful. Indeed, Rolls-Royce has been an extremely successful publicly owned company. But state control has undoubtedly been a real constraint on the company, which it can well do without. It is operating on an international scale and cannot easily fit its decision making into the necessary requirements of Government financial planning and funding. Of course, Rolls-Royce will continue to work extremely closely with Government, not least because of its position as a defence supplier, but also because of the Government's support through launch aid for certain of its civil aero engine projects. The relationship with Government will continue but the requirement to have commercial decision second-guessed by the Government will cease.

This morning the offer for sale of ordinary shares in Rolls-Royce was fully underwritten at a price of £1·70 a share. The shares have now been sub-underwritten at that price. This represents——

Mr. John Smith *rose*——

Mr. Channon: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will understand that I express no opinion on merits, apart from what is in the prospectus of this company.

Mr. Smith: Before the Secretary of State leaves the question of second-guessing commercial decisions, can he please tell us which commercial decision by Rolls-Royce since 1979 has been second-guessed by this Government?

Mr. Channon: I am not going to answer that ridiculous question. The House knows perfectly well that, with any company under Government control, there are controls and procedures which have to be gone through. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, who has served in government, knows that to be absolutely true, absolutely inevitable and absolutely a fact. It is very important to have commercial decisions taken by commercial people in the private sector.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Channon: I am not going to answer that ridiculous question. The House knows perfectly well that, with any company under Government control, there are controls and procedures which have to be gone through. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, who has served in government, knows that to be absolutely true, absolutely inevitable and absolutely a fact. It is very important to have commercial decisions taken by commercial people in the private sector.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Channon: No, I must get on. We have under an hour and three quarters and many hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that, if the Member addressing the House does not give way, he must not persist.

Mr. Channon: Approximately 320 million shares are initially being offered to the general public, including Rolls-Royce employees and pensioners. If the offer is at least twice subscribed, this number will be increased to 400 million shares, some 50 per cent. of the total. The remainder of the shares will be placed with financial institutions in the United Kingdom. There is no overseas offering.

A number of special offers have been made to employees and pensioners of the company. Employees with at least 12 months' full-time service will receive approximately £70-worth of free shares plus a further £2-worth of shares for every year that they have worked for the company. Such employees will also receive two free shares for every one which they buy, up to a limit of £150 for each employee. All eligible employees of the company will also receive a 10 per cent. discount on all shares bought, to a maximum of £2,000 per employee, and will be entitled to apply for a further £10,000-worth of shares on a priority basis. Pensioners of the company will also be able to apply for up to £10,000 worth of shares on a similar priority basis and at lower minimum application bands than members of the general public.

The prospectus will be published on Thursday 30 April. all who have registered with the Rolls-Royce share information office will be sent a prospectus, including a public application form. Application forms must be received by 10 am on Thursday 7 May. Copies of the prospectus have been placed in the Library of the House

It is not for me to make forecasts about Rolls-Royce's financial and commercial prospects. Hon. Members, together with prospective investors, must look at the prospectus and make their own judgments on the basis of the information it contains.

Mr. Nellist *rose*—

Mr. Channon: I am not going to give way. I want to get on and what I want to say must be said to the House. It is not my fault that the debate was fixed for today. The Opposition have a Supply day practically every week, and have not sought to choose this subject until today.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not true that this debate would not be taking place at all but for the Opposition's making time for it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for argument; it is not a matter for me. I must say to the House that a number of Members with very strong constituency interests are anxious to catch my eye and it is a very short debate. Interruptions of this kind only make it less possible for me to call those who want to be called.

Mr. Channon: I should like to refer to some of the key information in the prospectus and to what the board has to say about the company's prospects. I have already told the House the figure of profit before taxation of £120 million in 1986. The turnover of Rolls-Royce was then £1,800 million, of which £757 million was attributable to civil aero sales, £740 million to military aero sales and the balance to industrial and marine and other activities. It invested £132 million of its own funds in research and development. The total value of the company's order book at 20 March 1987 was £3.1 billion.

The prospectus says that the company has substantial order books for a number of its existing military aero engine products and good prospects for further sales. The company considers that its current Ministry of Defence and company-funded military development programmes give it a broad base of techology to explore new opportunities in the overseas military commercial market as they may arise.

There is no truth in the suggestion that Rolls-Royce is vulnerable to foreign control. Under the company's articles, no more than 15 per cent. of the company's shares can be foreign-held. This restriction applies to shares held by nominees on behalf of foreign interests. Anyone wishing to register a share must sign a declaration whether the share will be foreign-held. The provisions in the articles are similar to those that have operated successfully in the case of British Aerospace for no less than the last six years.

Nor is it possible for the articles to be changed in the future without the consent of the Government, who have a special share which enables them to prevent any change to the articles dealing with foreign ownership—a special share which continues indefinitely. There is no justification whatsoever for claims that these provisions will not be effective in ensuring domestic control of the company.

It is nonsense to state, as does the amendment tabled by the alliance, that this or any other privatisation is ideologically motivated and determined by the Government's excessive desire to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement. The Government are committed to privatisation because it works. The list of companies whose performance has been transformed once they have been liberated from state ownership grows ever longer. As far as the Opposition are concerned, it is very much a matter of sour grapes.

I would remind the House that, since being returned to the private sector, Amersham International has seen its profits double, British Aerospace's profits have tripled, Cable and Wireless has quadrupled its profits and the National Freight Consortium, 82·5 per cent. of which is owned by its employees, has increased its profits sevenfold. The Jaguar car company is now producing more cars than ever before and has created 2,000 new jobs since privatisation. Those are the facts, which the Opposition wilfully ignore.

All over the world, Governments are following the example that is being set in this country. In France, the Government have announced their intention to return 65 companies to the private sector. In Sweden, the state holding company has already sold 15 companies. Only the Opposition, blinkered by their ideological obsession with the past—clause 4 and all the rest of it—believe in public ownership and nationalisation. Even they, however, recognise the gulf between them and the British people, and we shall see who wins the argument at the end of the day. They dare not describe their policy by its proper name: "renationalisation" has become "social ownership". I do not believe that the British people will be so easily fooled.

Rolls-Royce will shortly become the 15th major business transferred to private sector ownership under this Government. The British Airports Authority will follow shortly. We intend to carry on with our programme of privatisation in this Parliament and in the next— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It must be obvious to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Nellist: Why not?

Mr. Channon: As I have told the House, and the Opposition do not like it, we shall continue with our programme of privatisation in this Parliament and in the next because it has been clearly shown to succeed. That will be the message not just from the House tonight but from the electorate when the time comes.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In view of the pressure of time, I appeal for extreme brevity by all those who now catch my eye.

8.20 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The speech of the Secretary of State in no way answered the case that was put by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Indeed, many of the remarks of the Secretary of State had no relevance at all to Rolls-Royce. His speech will be of no comfort to my constituents who are employed by Rolls-Royce in Hillington and East Kilbride, or to Rolls-Royce employees in any part of the country, who are deeply worried about the threat of privatisation. This concern extends beyond the employees to the local authorities, as was demonstrated by the lobby in the House a few weeks ago from lord mayors, mayors, lord provosts and others. The right hon. Gentleman could not be more mistaken if he thinks that the concerns of employees will be bought off by the special employee share offers that he mentioned in his speech.

There is good reason for those concerns. In recent years Rolls-Royce has had a tough time and lost about 20,000 jobs. In my own factory at Hillington, the number of employees, 2,700 is less than half what it was three of four years ago. Many sacrifices have been made by Rolls-Royce employees to bring the company into its present profitable position. The reward from the Government is to create this new uncertainty of privatisation, with real fears in many parts of the country that units of Rolls-Royce will be closed down completely after privatisation.

The right hon. Gentleman gave no assurances about that and made it a virtue that he could not give promises for the future. The people working in Rolls-Royce are

concerned about the future. They remember the history of the 1971 bankruptcy. It is an open secret that there have always been people within the management of Rolls-Royce who have considered that Rolls-Royce works on too many different sites all over the country.

A former chairman of Rolls-Royce told me that if those concerned were starting Rolls-Royce today they would not have their operations spread over 14 different locations in the United Kingdom. A number of these locations are very vulnerable to closure after privatisation. I can say with a good deal of authority, having been involved with the company for many years, that some of those sites would have been closed by now if Rolls-Royce had not been a publicly owned company.

Nothing that the right hon. Gentleman said will assuage the concerns of the employees, who have sacrificed jobs and have worked very hard to bring the company to its present position. The rewards are going, not to the employees, but to private shareholders. The share price was announced today. The initial reaction in the evening papers—*The London Evening Standard* and the *London Daily News*—was that when the shares eventually go on the market they will probably open at perhaps 20p premium on the first instalment of 85p of the price of 170p. On those expectations there will be a considerable killing. The rewards will go not to those who built up the company to what it is today, but to those who will invest in the company on the basis of the prospectus, and these will largely be financial institutions.

The Secretary of State confirmed that no less than 60 per cent. of the shares on offer have been placed with financial institutions. What have they to do with the past or future success of Rolls-Royce? The Secretary of State mentioned a profit of £120 million. If the extra £283 million that the Government are now putting in had been put in at the beginning of last year, the profit would have been £148 million. The taxpayer is not likely to get much from the future profitability of Rolls-Royce, because the prospectus says that £675 million-worth of unabsorbed tax losses are being carried forward, and no corporate tax will be paid for many years. The irony is that these tax losses have been allowed to accumulate only because the Government have been putting in money to cover the losses during earlier years when the company was recovering from its bankruptcy.

As my right hon. and learned Friend pointed out, there is no way in which the proceeds from the issue and sale of shares will in any compensate the taxpayer and the Government for the vast sums of money that have been put into Rolls-Royce since 1981. The gross proceeds that are allowed for in today's announcement are £1·36 billion. The net figure, deducting the £283 million that the Government put in, is just over £1 billion, which is roughly what the Government, on present-day prices, have already put into the company in share capital. Therefore, none of the launch-aid money—£400 million since 1971—the money that went into rescuing the RB211-22B, which brought down the company in 1971 and cost the Government £200 million, and the money that has gone into MOD contracts and into advanced engineering development, and so on, will be recovered from the sale of shares that has been announced today.

Over recent years this company has received £120 million net per year on average from the Government in launch-aid and in other ways, yet its directors have the impertinence to support privatisation, because they want the Government off their backs. Many other companies in the United Kingdom would be delighted to have the Government on their backs to the tune of £120 million a year. The same is true of British Aerospace. Sir Austin Pearce, in the recently published 1986 report, talks about the virtues of privatisation and not having to deal with the Government. British Aerospace has made an application to the Government for £750 million for development of the A330 and A340 Airbus. British Aerospace—and Rolls-Royce is exactly the same—will depend on Government money and cannot survive without it.

I am cynical about the attitude of the directors of Rolls-Royce when I read in the prospectus that they will all receive substantial increases in their salaries immediately after privatisation. I hope that it is some comfort to the employees of the company to know that the directors will do well out of privatisation.

Money has gone into this company. That is acceptable, because it is not just another private company, but a national asset. Rolls-Royce would not have been nationalised if it had not been a national asset. These so-called safeguards would not be needed, even under this privatisation, if the company was not considered, even by this Government, to be a national asset.

The safeguards apply only so long as the Government of the day want them to apply. We do not have the slightest confidence that the Government will continue to apply these safeguards by a restriction on foreign shareholding or in any other way. What will happen if the company gets into trouble again? I shall not talk down the company by mentioning the problems with the V2500 project, which only went ahead with Government launch aid, or the decision not to go ahead with V2500 Superfan, which could proceed only with launch aid. The Superfan project, if it proceeds, will go ahead—and I hope it will—only with launch aid. Some of these developments have not improved the prospects for Rolls-Royce in the years ahead.

What happens if at some time in the future—God forbid that it should happen, even under privatisation—Rolls-Royce gets into difficulty once more? The decision of the Government of the day will be to save the company, as in 1971, or see it go into foreign hands. Pratt and Whitney, and General Electric, would be delighted to buy up Rolls-Royce, which is their only competitor in the world. There are only three major aero-engine companies in the world. Two are in America and the other one is here, in this country—Rolls-Royce. Perhaps at some time the Japanese would be delighted to get their hands on it, because they are involved in the V2500 joint project.

All these are real risks that are causing genuine concern to my constituents who are employed in Rolls-Royce. They see the action of the Government in putting this major company at risk again as completely irresponsible. It is now enjoying success after an extremely difficult period following bankruptcy. My constituents support overwhelmingly the view of the Labour party that this privatisation should not happen. A Labour Government will reverse it at the earliest opportunity.

8.30 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The main consideration in the privatisation of Rolls-Royce should not be what is good for the Government or what is good for the trade unions, but what is best for the company and its work force. Privatised companies almost always do

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

better than companies in the public sector. The reason for this unassailable fact is that companies in the private sector are largely unshackled from Government interference and meddling. One of the main reasons why Rolls-Royce has done well over the last few years — management will attest to this—is that the Government have had a rigorous hands-off attitude towards the running of the company.

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that another Government which, heaven forbid, might be elected at some time, would pursue such an enlightened policy. We only have to go back to the 1970s to see the tremendous damage that Government intervention and meddling wrought on British industry. Managers in British Steel who suffered in the 1970s say that it was not the market place that decided what products and how many British Steel should produce, and that it was not management who decided on productivity and investment, but that it was the Government, the bureaucrats and politicians, who dictated what management should do. The damage that those policies caused to British Steel is still being felt today. Towards the end of their period of office, the Labour Government had to back-track rapidly on those policies. Almost brand new plants were mothballed or closed. That is the damage that Government interference and meddling can do to state-run industries.

I can understand the legitimate fears of people working for Rolls-Royce, who can remember well the traumas and problems when the company collapsed in 1971. I respect those fears, but the people should remember that Rolls-Royce is a very different company from what it was in 1971. It has a substantially better management. It has better manufacturing technology and more of it. It has a far bigger product spread, including co-operative deals with manufacturers all over the world. It is far less dependent on one leading technological product, which caused it so much trouble previously. Above all, it is a far more efficient company. In short, Rolls-Royce is better able to compete now than it was, admittedly under a bad management, in 1971.

Opposition Members show remarkably little faith in the management and work force of Rolls-Royce if they believe that it cannot survive and prosper in the private sector. The majority of the work force and management do not share the view of the Opposition; far from it. I do not want to imply disrespect towards the campaign against privatisation that has been waged by the trade unions, but the Strangers Gallery is hardly packed this evening. Only a few weeks ago there was an Adjournment debate about the proposed closure of a school in Derby; at 3 o'clock in the morning the Strangers Gallery was packed with 400 people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not refer to places outside the Chamber.

Mr. Oppenheim: I fully accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and apologise.

When other high technology companies were privatised we heard exactly the same fears as are being expressed legitimately by the opponents of privatisation. The trade unions, some of the work force, and Opposition Members said, for example, that British Aerospace would not be able to compete in the private sector. They said that research and development would suffer, that the company would go down the tube, that product development and investment would suffer, and that the company would rapidly go bankrupt. In fact, in the private sector British Aerospace has a record order book; it is spending record amounts on R and D; its profits are at a record level and its turnover is booming.

Exactly the same has happened to British Telecom. I remember well sitting through more than 100 hours in Standing Committee dealing with the privatisation of British Telecom when we were told by Opposition Members that after privatisation country areas would be cut off, that people would be electrocuted by their telephone apparatus, and that the whole system would collapse. British Telecom still has problems and it is not as efficient as it should be but it provides a much better service at a lower cost in real terms than it did in the public sector, when just to order a piece of equipment was like trying to get an interview with the Pope.

Another scare propagated by Opposition Members and put about by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) when he visited Derby recently was that Rolls-Royce in the private sector would be prey to foreign takeover bids. Opposition Members know that that is total nonsense. They know that the Government have proposed a golden share which will give them a veto on a foreign takeover. They know that under the privatisation proposals foreign share ownership will be limited to 15 per cent. or less and that 75 per cent. of the board, including the chairman and the managing director, will by law have to be British citizens. I can understand ordinary people being worried about such things but Opposition Members should not stoop to running a scare campaign when they know that the Government have made ample provision to prevent foreign takeover. Opposition Members are preying unfairly on people's fears.

Far from the taxpayer doing badly out of privatisation of Rolls-Royce, he will do amazingly well. Opposition Members say that we should keep this asset but if we did, when would we get a return? When would the Opposition propose selling it — in one year, in two years? If the Opposition say that the Government should never sell shares in Rolls-Royce that would mean that the taxpayer would never get a return on his investment. By selling the shares now the Government will get a double return. First, there will be more than £1 billion from the proceeds of the share sale; secondly, we will eventually get a substantial tax take on the profits of Rolls-Royce.

The profits of privatised industries have almost always been much larger than the profits when the companies were in the public sector. The profits of British Telecom and British Aerospace are more than twice what they were when in the public sector. The Government tax take is substantially larger. Surely it must be better for these large sums of money to be deployed where they are needed in health and education, rather than being locked up in a spurious, out-dated 1930s concept of public ownership.

Opposition Members have also claimed that the Government will not back Rolls-Royce in large strategic research and development projects, but the Government backed British Aerospace on the A320 and they have backed other companies on technological projects. The Government have backed projects which may not be commercially viable but which none the less are in the national interest. The Oppostion mentioned that the Government have been reluctant to put the full amount

into the A330 and the A340 which British Aerospace wanted. The reason is that the Government and many experts have a strong feeling that the A330 and the A340 projects may not be viable. Whereas the A320 had no real rivals when it was conceived, unfortunately the A330 and the A340 have pitched against them the Boeing 757, which uses Rolls-Royce engines, the Boeing 767, which also uses Rolls-Royce engines, proposed smaller versions of the long-serving Boeing 747 and the MD11 of McDonnell Douglas, which is selling extremely well.

Perhaps Opposition Members feel that they know better than the experts whether the A330 or the A340 are viable. If Opposition Members think that they know better they should ensure that these projects are viable before proposing that hundreds of millions of pounds are taken in tax from successful industries to put into those dubious projects. If they take that money away from our successful areas of manufacturing they will leave those successful industries with less money to invest in producing their products and jobs.

I am astonished that Opposition Members have not realised that privatisation is a positive policy. It works and it is good for companies and their work forces. Opposition Members are out on a limb on this matter. Socialist Government all over the world are busy privatising almost anything that moves. Recently in Spain, a strongly Socialist Government privatised its car industry. They are even proposing to privatise the motorways in Spain. Recently a Socialist-led coalition in Italy privatised Alfa Romeo, its state-owned car company. Recently in Australia, the Socialist Prime Minister proposed the privatisation of its state-owned internal airline, Australian Airlines.

Opposition Members are no strangers to privatisation. Was it not the Labour Government in 1977 who sold off huge chunks of the Government's holding in British Petroleum to get out of the financial mess that they had dug themselves into as a result of their irresponsible promises in 1974? I do not remember many Labour Members of Parliament objecting to that privatisation. Perhaps we shall hear something about that from Opposition Members later on.

If Rolls-Royce remains a well-managed company with a good work force it will succeed. Without a good management and strong work force, first-class products and without marketing those products positively and successfully, Rolls-Royce will not survive in the private or public sector. It is as simple as that. It has a better chance of surviving, prospering and contributing to the economy in the private sector.

8.41 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) began with one of the most self-contradictory arguments that I have heard in favour of the Government's policy. First, he argued that the interference of Government inevitably led to the downfall of companies, and that that did not happen if the Government did not interfere. Yet we are debating a company that got into severe difficulties, not as a result of Government interference but while it was in the private sector, and like many companies in the private sector it came to grief because of bad management. That had nothing to do with Government interference. The hon. Gentleman said that in all the time that Rolls-Royce has been in the public sector the Government have not interfered in its activities and that it has been an enormous success, so now it can go to the market. If it has been an enormous success—undoubtedly it has and we should pay tribute to the management and staff for the success that they have achieved in recent years—that seems to prove that companies in the public sector can also succeed without Government interference. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

The future of Rolls-Royce must be secured, in the interests of the country. I am sorry that the Secretary of State did not respond to the compelling arguments for securing the future of Rolls-Royce. We believe that the only way in which that security can be given to the company — I shall come to the reasons why it is necessary — is by retaining a majority shareholding in the company.

Why is it necessary to secure the interests and future of Rolls-Royce? It has a strategic role in the defence and industrial life of this country. A substantial public investment has been made in the company and there is a strong argument for ensuring a continuing return to the public from the profitable activities of the company now that it has been given support from the public purse. Any profitable company is giving tax returns in corporation tax to the country and the Exchequer.

The substantial Government stake in British Petroleum, to which the hon. Member for Amber Valley referred, did not inhibit its success. Indeed, it helped to sustain that company and make it the successful British multinational that it now is.

We believe that there is an overwhelming reason for giving the employees an opportunity to participate in the ownership of shares in Rolls-Royce, and I welcome the incentives that have been given to employees to participate in that. I am sure that that is a development which will be widely welcomed in the company.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State did not respond to my intervention and tell us why the Government are not ensuring the wider share ownership of smaller shareholders. Perhaps the Minister for Information Technology will tell us why that is the case when he responds to the debate.

The alliance strongly believes in wider share ownership and we are sorry that the inducements that have been given to small shareholders on previous occasions have not been given this time.

Why must the position of Rolls-Royce be protected? Defence orders amount to £1·46 billion of Rolls-Royce's total order book of £3·1 billion. A substantial amount of its output is going straight into the armed services. As has been pointed in the debate, it is unlikely that the Air Force and many other parts of the armed services could operate without Rolls-Royce products. That does not merely relate to the provision of initial products. It also relates —as I was able to see with my own eyes in the Royal Navy spare parts depot in my constituency — to the spares which are necessary, particularly during times of crisis such as the Falklands, to ensure that there is continuity of supply and that that supply is sustained to defend the country.

That is why there is a major strategic defence interest for sustaining Rolls-Royce. It plays a vital role in industrial activities of Britain. It is one of the major contributors to United Kingdom research and development, and on average it has contributed £220 million a year over the past five years. As a percentage of turnover,

[Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth]

gross research and development expenditure was £255 million in 1986, or 14 per cent. That substantial research and development activity is a key part of the country's research and development work. It applies to materials and high technologies and involves highly skilled, highly educated and experienced people who are a prime asset not only to Rolls-Royce but to other companies and the country. It is vital that our presence in the technological sector in which Rolls-Royce operates is maintained.

The total launch aid that the Government have provided since 1982 for research and development, tooling and learner costs is £199 million. The Government have made an enormous contribution to that research and development work. The Government have made a contribution of £162 million to advanced engineering programmes and since 1982 Rolls-Royce has received £287 million in development contracts from the Ministry of Defence.

The role that the company plays in engineering and high technology is substantially funded by the Government and is of strategic importance in the industrial sector. The figures have already been given for the substantial investments in the company since 1971. It is right and proper that the taxpayer should expect a continued return on that investment.

Inevitably, after the events that led to Rolls-Royce coming into the private sector, doubts must be raised about whether the same problems could arise again in the future. The cost of developing aero engines is quite enormous. New engines such as the prop fan cost at least £500 million, and bigger ones cost more, up to £1 billion in development. I was interested to read in *The Economist* two weeks ago its estimate that on today's costs, developing a novel engine design such as the prop fan may be as difficult and as expensive as it was for Rolls-Royce to give birth to the RB211. The danger is that another development could have the same debilitating effect on the company's fortunes.

I do not believe that anybody in the House or in the country wants to see Rolls-Royce in that predicament again. We believe that the way in which that can be safeguarded against, and in which Rolls-Royce's position in the defence and industrial spheres can be secured for the future, is by the Government retaining a majority stake while having the benefit of private funds to buy some of the shares, and above all by allowing employees to have a stake in their own enterprise. That would ensure that the company could succeed, have a secure future and continue to play the role that is so important in this nation's life. We very much regret that the Government have not gone down that path.

To sustain the argument for total state ownership, the Labour Opposition have had to exclude any possibility of the employees having any stake in their own enterprise. We do not believe that that is necessary. The future of the company can be secured without total state ownership and we very much regret that the Labour party, despite its new ideas about social ownership, has not been prepared to go down the road of seeing the importance of giving employees a share in the company, even if it does not want to give the public a share.

We believe that the future of the company can be secured by the Government having a majority stake, and we regret that neither the Conservative nor the Labour party is prepared to accept that alternative.

8.52 pm

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) made an interesting speech because, not for the first time, the alliance spokesman chose his path by referring to the two major parties in British politics and simply splitting the difference. It was also interesting that he devoted most of his speech to arguing that there is an important national interest in having Rolls-Royce in British hands. That is not controversial. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has put forward a procedure that will ensure precisely that. All my hon. Friends agree with the hon. Member for Stockton, South on that point.

What the hon. Member did not do is explain either why my right hon. Friend's scheme is inadequate or how, in detail, his preferred alternative would work. If one is to adopt the alternative of a 51 per cent. shareholding in the company, it is incumbent on one to explain whether one proposes to use those shares to get involved in the company, in which case there will be some difficulty in persuading others to buy the other 49 per cent.; or whether one would stand apart from the company and not use the right that a 51 per cent. holding gives, in which case the obvious question is, "What is the point of the alliance policy?"

Like, I believe, the large majority of my constituents who work at the Rolls-Royce plant at Mountsorrel in my constituency, I support the privatisation that my right hon. Friend has introduced. I hasten on to say that I would also, if I had been a Member of the House then, have supported the nationalisation of Rolls-Royce in 1971. I see nothing inconsistent in my position. Quite the contrary —I think the fact that some Labour Members have sought to suggest that there is some inconsistency there reflects the extent to which the Labour party is still a prisoner of the political philosophy written by an obscure German philosopher in the middle of the last century. The history of the state's involvement in Rolls-Royce is an important example of how the Government and industry, working together, can produce benefits to society as a whole which neither on their own would have been capable of producing.

In 1971, Rolls-Royce went bust, as my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) rightly said, purely because it was badly run, and the top management and investors paid the price of failure. The investors lost their investment and the top management lost their jobs, and rightly so. We do not need to waste much sympathy on them. If Rolls-Royce had been a minor engineering company, that would have been the end of the story, but it is not a minor engineering company. It is, as the hon. Member for Stockton, South, said, a vital strategic company and the Government led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) quite rightly stepped in, recognising the vital national interest that existed then and still exists, and ensured that both the industrial peace and the defence interest represented by Rolls-Royce were safeguarded.

It is also worth mentioning that the thought would probably have occurred to my right hon. Friend that Rolls-Royce represented a vital industrial and defence

interest not only for this country but for the continent of Europe as a whole. It is the only significant European aero engine producer. Therefore, the Government of the day were right to take the view, both as a British Parliament and as Europeans, that they could not allow Rolls-Royce to disappear.

That position is now totally transformed. The bulk of the progress since 1971 has happened since 1979. The improved performance of the company occurred between 1979 and 1987 and not between 1971 and 1979. We now have a company with a product range that can stand alongside that of Pratt and Whitney and General Electric and can offer a product across the whole range of aero engines, and, even more importantly, a product range the production of which is supported by competitive manufacturing costs.

Mountsorrel plant is one among many in Rolls-Royce that have lost jobs as a result of the slimming-down process, but the chairman of Rolls-Royce, contrary to the scare tactics adopted by the Opposition suggesting that the future of the plants is insecure, wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) making this clear. He said:

> "I do not think your constituents need to worry about the vulnerability of Mountsorrel. Its productivity is much improved, and we are currently working on plans for future investment."

The company has pursued a strategy of making production costs competitive and then investing in success. That is the record of success of Rolls-Royce over the past few years.

Why should we change the position that has endured since 1971? I make no apology for my belief that it should be the norm in a mixed economy for successful firms to be in the private sector. I believe that private sector management is right in theory as it devolves decision making through society and works in practice, as it produces faster growth, better job prospects and higher living standards for those operating under that system. Therefore, I believe that my right hon. Friend is right to introduce a change to Rolls-Royce.

The effect of that change is to maximise the responsibility and involvement of those in the company, whether they are managers, shop-floor workers or investors. All those people should have a stake in the consequences of decisions taken. If the company is successful, those people should participate in that success. When they make decisions they should recognise that, if those decisions are wrong, they are expected to accept responsibility. They cannot expect to shuffle responsibility on to some obscure Whitehall committee. Because of that commitment to a sharpened sense of responsibility, I particularly welcome the employee share ownership incentives that my right hon. Friend discussed today.

Those provisions may lie behind the fact that, although the shop stewards committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions put out propaganda opposing the Rolls-Royce privatisation, all the evidence suggests that a large number——

Mr. Nellist: What evidence?

Mr. Dorrell: The evidence I have obtained from people who have visited my surgery. The evidence I have received from people I have stopped in the street and the people who talked to me when I went round the Rolls-Royce plant a week ago. That evidence suggests that many Rolls-Royce employees want to buy shares in the company and want to participate in an important and successful company.

I believe that the privatisation route is exactly right for Rolls-Royce. It is also important that we do not overstate the extent to which privatisation cuts the umbilical cord between the Government and Rolls-Royce. We are all aware that, in the market place in which Rolls-Royce operates — as the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) rightly said — it will be competing against Pratt and Whitney and General Electric. Those companies are involved in a sophisticated support operation with the American Government. The American Government give considerable support to the companies that compete against Rolls-Royce.

My right hon. Friend has made it abundantly clear that Rolls-Royce will receive the same level of support as its competitors within the market. Although the Government are privatising Rolls-Royce, they are far from neutral about whether Rolls-Royce succeeds. The Government, like any patriotic British person, want Rolls-Royce to succeed.

In the months ahead, I hope that my right hon. Friend will follow up the commitments that he has given to ensure that public purchasing in Britain is clearly attuned to the needs of Rolls-Royce. We should copy the public purchasing practice of the United States. I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that launch aid will be available so that Rolls-Royce can compete with American competitors. Moreover, in the European Council of Ministers, I hope that my right hon. Friend will take steps to encourage the European dimension of the Rolls-Royce market. It will be easier for my right hon. Friend to do that when Rolls-Royce is a privatised company rather than part of the United Kingdom's public sector. Rolls-Royce is part of the European fight back in the aerospace industry. In recent years that industry has been dominated by American competitors.

I support privatisation because I believe it gives greater incentives and responsibility to the people in the company. I believe that it paves the way to a more mature relationship between Rolls-Royce and the Government.

9.2 pm

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): The hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) confirmed what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said—private enterprise is happy to take the profits when they are going, but reserves the right, when the going gets rough, to go back to the taxpayer to bail it out. Apparently, the hon. Member for Loughborough wants it both ways.

We are all aware that the Government do not like public enterprises — the Secretary of State underlined that in his speech. This dislike seems to increase in proportion to the success of the enterprise. If ever there was a case of dogma defying logic it is the privatisation of Rolls-Royce. Everything that a newly privatised Rolls-Royce might wish to do can be done now by the publicly owned enterprise. The Government are not allowing the facts to get in the way of their prejudice.

In 1976 the then chairman of Rolls-Royce, Sir Kenneth Keith, a self-confessed private enterprise man through and through, said that he had a high degree of autonomy in the company and that the Government did not interfere with

[Mr. George Park]

the running of the business. Three years later a Conservative Government were elected who never had an industrial strategy. They failed to acknowledge that national interests required Rolls-Royce to stay in the forefront of world technology. Even more significantly, the Government started to interfere because of their political beliefs. I think that that sparked off the comment today by the current chairman, who says that Governments do not know how to run businesses. That is true in the case of this Government.

Since 1971, when private ownership failed and the company had to be brought into the public sector by the Government of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), there has been an unremitting struggle by the work force and the management to bring the company to its present successful position. Large-scale redundancies took place in 1971, both in the company and in its outside suppliers. Redundancies have continued at intervals up to the present time and in the last few weeks there have been several hundred redundancies at the Ansty plant near Coventry. Let me remind the House that those redundancies were on top of 1,000 redundancies in Massey-Ferguson. At a time when the work force, as a result of its efforts, is entitled to look forward to more secure and better-paid jobs, the whole enterprise is to be thrown back into the melting pot.

The effects of the privatisation proposals are already being felt. The collaborative venture on Superfan has been abandoned and the Government are again dragging their feet on repayable support for the airbus 330 and 340. More orders for Rolls-Royce worth £1·2 billion would have been secured if Superfan had been available. The collaboration with General Electric has collapsed, leaving Rolls-Royce with a bill of about £100 million for tooling.

This situation highlights one of the principal concerns about the privatisation proposals—the continuing need for high levels of research and development. It is a dilemma that faces all the principal engine makers—General Electric and Pratt and Whitney as well as Rolls-Royce. The first one that eases off on research and development faces the prospect of losing its position on radical technology and consequent sales.

Prospective investors will not have forgotten that it was the pursuit of high technology on the RB211 that contributed to the Rolls-Royce bankruptcy in 1971, when the company was recovered only by Government intervention. It could happen again and employees and communities around the plants could once more face the traumas of the early 1970s. At the same time there would be the further erosion of the technological base of British industry. There is some faint recognition of this possibility in the privatisation proposals, with the emphasis on institutional investors rather than small shareholders, despite the claims of the Government to be creating a nation of shareholders.

The limitations on no more than 15 per cent. for a single shareholder and no overseas offers are only delays to take the issue safely beyond the date of the next election and to allay fears that Rolls-Royce could find itself in the same position as Jaguar, with over half its shares in American hands. The vital difference between the two companies is the implications for Britain's national security, yet the Government know that they have no control once shares are freely traded.

Financial pundits are forecasting that profits will soar after privatisation. However, it was only in 1984 that, for the first time in years, Rolls-Royce made a small profit of £20 million, rising to £120 million in 1986 on a turnover of £1,802 million. Creditable though these efforts are, they are hardly likely to be the sort of returns looked for by the City and must put at risk the levels of expenditure on research and development running at the rate of £255 million in 1986. That has the consequences that I outlined earlier, given the track record of most of British industry on investment in research and development.

According to the 1986 annual report of Rolls-Royce, military sales remained static. Industrial and marine sales rose by 7 per cent. due to the depressed state of the power generation and oil and gas markets. It was really the increase of 31 per cent. in the civil sector which led to the present healthy order books. But the airlines are in some difficulty, as the 140 airline members of the International Air Transport Association made a total profit of only $100 million in 1985. If Rolls-Royce is to maintain its share of that market, it must also retain its lead in technology through R and D. Private enterprise has shown once before that it cannot take the strain. Why should it be any different second time round? What sort of interest and commitment would be shown in longer-term projects such as HOTOL?

Experience shows that what is more likely is a maximising of profits irrespective of the consequences, since short-term returns are the be-all and end-all. Complaints are being heard today that the share issue price will not yield a big enough killing. Private investors would not be prepared to wait 15 to 20 years for a good-selling engine to progress from development to break-even cost.

To make the forecasts of soaring profits come true more quickly after privatisation, there is the likelihood of moves to hive off the repair and overhaul activities at East Kilbride, the industrial and marine division at Ansty, plus the sale of Leavesden to property developers. At present, when Rolls-Royce collaborates with other partners on a project, its expertise is safeguarded by strict rules about technology transfer. But in the future the company's rivals may own part of it. Here the brokers of Hoare Govett disagree with the Secretary of State because they are quoted as having said that they look forward to American and Japanese investors piling in, to use their words. It will be entirely different from what we have seen in other privatisations such as Coventry Climax referred to by my hon. Friend for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

The proposals before us this evening will plunge Rolls-Royce back into doubt and uncertainty. What profits there are will not go to the taxpayer or the work force whose money and whose dedication brought it to its present position. Why should this highly skilled work force be asked to re-enact the struggles of the 1970s? Why should the nation's security be put in jeopardy? Why should we agree to further erosion of the technological base of British industry? Why should we put Rolls-Royce at risk to satisfy dogma and greed?

9.13 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): The attitude of Opposition Members is always one of trying to ensure that as much fear and distrust is generated on almost anything that takes place. That is again happening with Rolls-Royce. There is uncertainty in the minds of many

employees. Any major change brings about uncertainty. As the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) said, the Ansty factory in my constituency has lost jobs again recently. That also breeds an uncertainty, but that uncertainty within Rolls-Royce has been going on for many years.

Rolls-Royce is a profitable business now, and it should be a profitable business in the future. From that base, one of the things that privatisation is likely to do is to develop the company in a way that is likely to remove the uncertainty. People will be able to see with confidence what the future holds. Whatever may be said, it is hard to believe that Governments who try to control or interfere with any company that is nationalised do not have a major effect on how that company develops.

One of the compensations for the people in Rolls-Royce is that as it moves forward it will need to diversify considerably. No company is static. The Opposition seem to suggest that it is static industry that develops only one technology. They seem to be suggesting that we just took over in 1971 and that it has carried on in the old way, but with support from the Government. The position is entirely different from that. Since 1971 there has been the construction of a company that is distinctly more efficient. It is no longer reliant on such a small base for its production, profit and success. Its technological developments and international collaboration are bringing about a progressive view of the industry that was not there in the past.

I pay tribute to the management and workers of Rolls-Royce for what they have had to suffer. What they saw in 1971 must be at the back of minds. However, the way to give confidence in the future is not to suggest that the company may or may not be subsidised to some extent, but to look forward with vision, believing that the diversification and flexibility that private enterprise can bring will serve the company better than the dependence that it has had in the past. That does not mean that research and development, defence contracts and other interests in development and technology will not receive help or encouragement from the Government in different ways. Of course they will. The important thing is that there will be flexibility, which will give confidence.

The pay back to the Government and the taxpayer is the possibility of increased profits from a company that is free to go forward. It will possibly generate more profit than could ever have been expected if it had remained in Government control.

It has been said that the Government cannot run industry. The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East said that this Government cannot run industry. I would suggest that no Government can. It is wrong to rely on the Civil Service or the House for the successful running of a major technological industry. We can help, as we helped Rolls-Royce from its delicate and harmed state of 1971. That company has now been rebuilt so that it is strong enough to go where it properly belongs—in the private sector, where it can hold its own against global competition. More and more the competition has not been European or British, it has become global, and Rolls-Royce is beginning to live with that successfully.

That situation will be developed in the private sector, with a proper return to the investor and the work force, because the work force will own part of the company. I am sure that many of them will take up the shares that are being offered to them. That is the success of a company developing; a company with the interests of the work force and the country at heart. Rolls-Royce should have a much better time in the future than it has had in the past 16 years.

9.18 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I wish to make a few brief remarks about my concern and the concern of the work force at the Rolls-Royce plant in Sunderland. I have heard some remarkable things about the success of private enterprise, and I want to put the debate in a Sunderland context.

Private enterprise led to more than just the collapse of Rolls-Royce in 1971. Around the same period, we remember in Sunderland the Court Line disaster. Had the shipbuilding part of that company not been nationalised by my hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), the few remaining shipyards in Sunderland would no longer be there. That is a tale of the failure of private enterprise. There are other examples of that failure. Plessey, a multinational private company, pulled out of Sunderland. Joplings Forge, which is privately owned, recently pulled out of Sunderland. Some smaller parts of British Shipbuilders have already privatised, such as Sunderland Forge. What happened to that company is a scandal. The conduct of its owner, Mr. Brian Masterson, ought to merit a full debate in the House. There is a sorry story of private enterprise and privatisation under the Government.

We know that Rolls-Royce in Sunderland is highly successful, but it is one of the few employers left in Sunderland; one of the few that is expanding and which still has training and apprenticeships. The fear is that it is a peripheral plant. When the Secretary of State opened this debate he dismissed the notion of the Government, as he put it, second-guessing and interfering. That shows the deep division of philosophy between him and Labour Members.

The one assurance that we in Sunderland want is that Rolls-Royce will come under public ownership, so that in times of competition and intense and ruthless multinational market forces, if there were an attempt to rationalise the plant, close it down, move it elsewhere, contract the work out, diversify or whatever, there would be the possibility of state intervention to prevent that happening. State control is one of the reasons why we still have some small shipbuilding and coal mining in Sunderland, pathetic as it is and much as it has declined, whereas private industry has failed on almost every front.

In a constituency which has the 12th highest unemployment in the country—two thirds of our school leavers are unemployed and long-term unemployment is getting worse—one of the few signs of hope and the only connection we have left with high technology engineering is Rolls-Royce. The danger is that under private ownership, because of market forces or rationalisation, the plant may close. Apart from the strong objection on principle, I know from my experience that the Rolls-Royce work force in Sunderland—whatever Tory Members have said about workers in other parts of the country—are overwhelmingly opposed to privatisation.

With all the talk about the success of private enterprise and the assurances I have been given by Rolls-Royce management, recent events have put a question mark over it all. For instance, a multinational company ruthlessly decided to close the Caterpillar plant at Uddingston—a

[Mr. Bob Clay]

profitable plant which had a full order book. No one could stop that plant closing, just as there is no assurance that Rolls-Royce in Sunderland, which is successful, profitable and expanding, will survive outside public ownership.

I would like the Minister to state in his reply not only that the plant will remain open and continue to expand, but that the East Kilbride and other plants will do so as well. Unless the Minister can speak confidently in that respect, our fears will remain. He cannot speak confidently, because this Government are washing their hands of any responsibility for people in the work force in a town of high unemployment such as Sunderland.

9.23 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I rise to speak because of the comments of the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). Everything that is negative and gloomy has been brought out. We are debating tonight one of the greatest success stories of British manufacturing industry, because Rolls-Royce epitomises all that is excellent. It stands for craftsmanship and reliability throughout the world. It has emerged from that 1971 disaster, which has been referred to many times, to become a world-beating company at the forefront of high technology, exporting no less than 28 per cent. of its output to the competitive market in North America. It has set a first-class example to the rest of British industry on how best to co-operate, not only with our friends in Europe but with our partners in North America and Japan.

It is a great tribute that we have seen today, on impact day, the launch of this magnificent company on the runway to a highly successful privatisation.

I understand the concern of the Rolls-Royce employees. I have met representatives of the unions and discussed those concerns with them. But they should take heart from the success of the privatisation policy in many other spheres. It has been an overwhelming success and has returned industries into the hands of genuine public ownership; into the hands of the people and out of the day-to-day control of politicians. I am convinced that the people of Britain would feel that our country was safer were such a strategic industry to be in the hands of shareholders rather than in the hands of a Government in which the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and some of his wilder friends had some control. Britain now has 8·5 million shareholders. That is genuine public ownership, and evidence of the enormous popularity of the policy.

It is offensive to suggest that somehow a privatised Rolls-Royce will not be able to look after Britain's defence needs. That is a disgraceful statement to make. I know that the unions feel strongly about it, but I urge them to hold back on that one, because it does not help their case. The Rolls-Royce success has been built in the private sector. It is worth reminding the House that it was due to the judgment of Rolls-Royce that R. J. Mitchell and others produced the Spitfire, initially as a private venture operation, which saved Britain from defeat. It was despite the misjudgments of pre-war politicians that the second world war was not the disastrous defeat for Britain which it might have been.

That is a salutary point for some of those who argue that Rolls-Royce should remain a nationalised industry in order to provide for the defence needs of the nation. That never was the case until 1971. Indeed, our defence needs have, for the major part of the century, and at our most critical hour, been provided by the private sector.

I pay tribute to the management and work force of Rolly-Royce who have brought about this magnificent transformation and enabled the company to return to its rightful place in the private sector. I do not represent Rolls-Royce workers, but I am proud to have visited several of its factories in Britain and to have seen the excellent work that has been done and the new technology that har been put in. That is a great tribute to British manufacturing industry.

The tribute that I can pay to the management and work force of Rolls-Royce is best summed up in the splendid stained glass window which is to be seen at Derby which is a tribute to the Battle of Britain pilots. An inscription at the bottom says

"Dedicated to the pilots of the Battle of Britain who turned the work of our hands into the salvation of our country."

In the work that they have done at Rolls-Royce in peacetime they have turned the work of their hands into the economic salvation of our country, and I warmly commend privatisation.

9.28 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I have listened with fascination to the debate, and I particularly note the observation just made by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) about the stained glass window in Rolls-Royce in Derby, which, like all the rest of the Derby Rolls-Royce plant, is in my constituency, where many thousands of my constituents work.

I do not know how many constituents the hon. Members for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) or for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) have heard from who have spoken in favour of the privatisation of Rolls-Royce, but I wish that they had attended the open-air meeting at which I spoke which was attended by thousands of the Derby work force—it did not quite pour with rain but it looked very much as though it was about to—who came to protest at the way in which the Government are putting their jobs at risk.

As has often been mentioned during the debate, Rolls-Royce is a wonderful company. Rolls-Royce is a world-beating company. Conservative Members cannot stand the fact that that world beating company became a world-beating company again in the public sector. That is why they are insisting on putting the jobs of our constituents at risk. The fact of the matter is that Rolls-Royce failed in private hands. It has been restored to prosperity in public hands.

I object strongly to the impertinence of those favouring privatisation who suggest that those hon. Members and their constituents who oppose privatisation lack faith in Rolls-Royce. Of course they have faith in the company. They have faith in the company and the sales force. They have faith in Rolls-Royce to make good, particularly if it operates and competes fairly with other companies in the world. However, they have no faith in the Government and their friends in the City. They are convinced that the City, which would have let Rolls-Royce go under and which was quite prepared to let Ferranti go under—another company operating in a high-tech area where there is a long lead time for a return on capital and where large sums are needed for research and development—

and particularly after the Government's encouragement of shareholding as easy and a certain get-rich-quick operation, will not support and sustain Rolls-Royce in the way that is needed, and so provide the only way to secure jobs for our constituents.

Our constituents have no faith in the Government's golden share mechanism. No one knows who was behind the Westland operation, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) mentioned earlier. What faith can we possibly have in the Government's assurances that they will know who is behind the shareholdings in Rolls-Royce? Our constituents have no faith in the Government to protect them with regard to shareholding and share ownership. They have no faith in the Government's willingness to put money into Rolls-Royce as the Government are now being asked to do for British Aerospace to continue to support the projects that are so desperately needed.

Many of my constituents fear that Rolls-Royce is coming full circle and that the Government are experimenting with Rolls-Royce because of their hatred of success in the public sector. Unfortunately they are justified in fearing that their jobs are being put at risk by the Government's dogma. I trust that when they go to the polls, they will remember that in considering the jobs of Conservative Members.

9.31 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): In the few minutes that are available to me, I want to make a few references to the Rolls-Royce plant at Barnoldswick in the constituency of Pendle. A number of workers in that factory come from my constituency and several factories in Burnley are dependent on the success, viability and future of Rolls-Royce. Lucas Aerospace and BEP are two of the larger companies involved, but a number of other industries in Pendle, Burnley and north-east Lancashire as a whole are vitally dependent upon the success of Rolls-Royce. Bearing in mind what happened in February 1971, there is a great fear among the employees in Rolls-Royce and employees in the other industries involved in north-east Lancasnire and in the community at large.

One worry of the people in north-east Lancashire and a worry especially felt in Barnoldswick can be summed up in the words of the Minister for Information Technology, who visited Barnoldwick last year. He referred to the factory at Barnoldwick as being "a bit off the beaten track". Many people in north-east Lancashire believe that, because they are not on the main railway network or linked to the main motorway network, they are a "bit off the beaten track". Therefore, we are afraid that, if there are to be any cuts or factory closures, they may well unfortunately take place in north-east Lancashire.

For many years, our traditional industries have declined and the people of north-east Lancashire have entered other industries. Indeed, Rolls-Royce and Lucas Aerospace were relocated in north-east Lancashire during the war and played a vital part in the early work of the development of the jet engine. At the moment, one of the important development sections of Rolls-Royce is at Barnoldwick. However, there is talk of closing that section. When we refer to rationalisation and diversification — to which Conservative Members have referred tonight—we all know that that frequently means factory closures and redundancies, most often in areas where there is little alternative employment for the people affected.

This is a genuine fear of ours. I must again stress that it would affect not only Rolls-Royce but the other industries as well. We recognise that the present position has been achieved largely because of Government support given to the industry and also because of the sacrifices made by many of the workers, who have been determined to make a success of the company. What a tragedy it would be if, having reached the present position, we were to throw the company's prosperity away because of the dogma of a Government who are determined to privatise everything that it is possible to dispose of as speedily as they can.

We must recognise that private ownership is greedy for quick profits. The Secretary of State himself, when speaking earlier this evening of the success of the privatised industries, summarised that success by speaking in terms of the massive growth in profit of those companies. The one big difference between the two sides of the House is that Opposition Members do not judge everything in terms of profit. We judge in terms of service to the nation as a whole, to the consumer and to the employees of an industry. These aspects cannot be ignored.

The future of the industry, in the interests of both the nation as a whole and the employees, would be far better served if this company, whose name enjoys worldwide renown, remained in the public sector rather than being privatised in accordance with the Tory party's dogma.

9.36 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham Hodge Hill): On behalf of the Labour party, I should like to make it clear at the outset that we very much hope that Rolls-Royce will be successful and profitable and that we expect it to be so, at least in the short term. That is the whole point of the debate. Rolls-Royce is engaged in a high-risk business, which needs long-term investment and a long-term view of its projects, product developments and prospects. After all, that is why Rolls-Royce was taken into public ownership in the first place.

Rolls-Royce went bankrupt under private ownership and was rescued, with all-party support, by a Conservative Government. The Secretary of State tells us, by implication at least, that in the past 16 years of public ownership Rolls-Royce has improved its management, its efficiency and its sales and has now begun to make a profit. But the world outside the company has not changed. The design, manufacture and sale of aeroengines is still a high-risk and competitive business. Nor have Britain's financial institutions changed. The City of London still takes a short-term view and wants short-term profits. So a Rolls-Royce dependent on the City of London for investment, however profitable the investment in the long term, will always have a question mark over its long-term future. Rolls-Royce will inevitably suffer from that uncertainty. Uncertainty is the real enemy of industrial success. That is why the Government's insistence on privatising Rolls-Royce is bad for the company.

It is also bad for the people who work for Rolls-Royce. The hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) tells us that the work force want a stake in a successful and profitable company. But what they want above all is the certainty, the security, the stability of knowing that they have a job, a real job and a job for the future. They do not want any unnecessary uncertainty about that future. That

[Mr. Terry Davis]

is why privatisaton and a privately owned Rolls-Royce, which is dependent on the City of London for its funds, is bad for the work force.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Davis: Although I am pressed for time, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall certainly give way.

Mr. McLoughlin: What happened to Jaguar when it was privatised? The hon. Gentleman comes from the west midlands and he knows what happened to that company.

Mr. Davis: I am delighted that that has been raised. I was about to come to Jaguar in my speech. In fact, I shall refer not only to Jaguar but to other companies in the west midlands.

However, it is because privatisation is bad for the work force that so many local authorities have expressed concern, and why so many mayors, lord mayors and lord provosts and leaders of all political parties, including Conservatives, came to the House of Commons to lobby against the Government's policy.

The uncertainty is also bad for a group of people who have hardly been mentioned this evening. They are the suppliers of Rolls-Royce and their employees. The people who work for the suppliers must rightly be concerned about competition from other suppliers who can provide components of higher quality, or more cheaply. They do not need any additional uncertainty about the long-term future of their principal customers.

The Government's insistence on privatisation is bad for the taxpayer. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) explained how the Government's total investment in Rolls-Royce is now somewhere between £1·5 billion and £2 billion. However, that investment is to be sold for £1·3 billion. It is to be sold at a loss, at the very time when the company has become profitable. The taxpayer took the risk, but private shareholders will take the profits. However, it will not stop there. Everyone agrees that after privatisation Rolls-Royce will still need Government funds for research and development and launch aid. In good years, the shareholders will take the profits, but in bad years, when the company needs money to launch new products, the taxpayer will foot the bill.

The only argument that has been advanced by the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends is to tell us that, in some mysterious way, privatisation leads, inevitably, to even greater success. The Secretary of State listed five companies, the performance of which has improved since privatisation. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) referred to one of those companies, Jaguar. However, to say that the performance of those companies has improved since privatisation, is not to say that their performance has improved as a result of privatisation. That ignores completely, as the hon. Gentleman ignored — *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State was totally unable to answer a direct question from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East who asked him to tell us on what occasion even this Government second-guessed the management of Rolls-Royce. We have it on record from the former chairman of Rolls-Royce that the previous Labour Government did not intervene.

Let us deal with the mysterious way in which privatisation improves the performance of companies. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West ignored the fact that there are many companies which, like Rolls-Royce, have flourished under public ownership. We have had debates on other industries, such as the motor industry. Sections of the Rover Group are profitable and have improved their performance.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: At last.

Mr. Davis: Those sections have done that as a result of investment under public ownership. To give just one example, Freight-Rover was losing money under private ownership. Conservative Members also wish to ignore those companies that have been privatised, and then have failed. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West, referred to Jaguar — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) should listen. I have already identified one such section in my own constituency. I am now dealing with his hon. Friend who claims to know Coventry and who referred to Jaguar.

Coventry also has Rolls-Royce. Right next to Rolls-Royce is Coventry Climax, which was privatised in 1981. At the time of privatisation, Coventry Climax had 3,000 men and women working there. They were told that their jobs were secure, just as the Rolls-Royce workers have been told that their jobs are secure now. Their jobs were secure for five years, past a general election. However in 1986, the work force at Coventry Climax was reduced from 3,000 to 600. Conservative Members ignore that also. I am not saying that that was necessarily the result of privatisation. However, I think it was because of the people who bought Coventry Climax and who took over the company, milked it, stripped it and ran it down. But the point is that privatisation is not some mysterious, magic formula which produces job security or increases profits. It can lead to failure as well as success.

We all know that the Government are determined to privatise everything they can, not because it is in the industrial interests of companies, nor because they are interested in industrial success; they are interested in dogma. For 40 years we have had a consensus between the main political parties that there should be a mixed economy. The Labour party still believes in it, but the Conservative Government have rejected it. By voting for the motion tonight the Labour party will affirm its belief in the mixed economy and reject the views of the extremists on the Government's Benches.

9.45 pm

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and I agreed to restrict the time that we would take in the debate to allow the maximum number of hon. Members to participate, so I hope that that will be borne in mind in interventions.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about Government interference, and I should like to observe immediately that the present administration between Rolls-Royce and the Government operates on the basis of an annual report and frequent consultations between the company and the Government. It is a question whether that is interference. The plain fact is that it is not possible for the company to embark on major investment programmes, or even to decide on matters such as the salaries of the chief executive

and top people in the company, without consulting the Government. If that is not interference, I do not know what is.

For some time the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) has been asking, and I have been attempting to answer, questions about the extent of the launch aid given on the RB211 programme. He will have seen from my answers that it totals £537 million. He seems to want to import launch aid into the present privatisation process, when the capital structure is completely different. I tried to understand from his speech whether he was suggesting that Rolls-Royce should not be eligible for launch aid. I have already told him about the levies of £340 million that we receive from that programme, but he wants the company in future to continue to be eligible for research and development programmes. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) urged that the company should be so eligible.

Tonight many hon. Members have voiced their anxiety on behalf of their constituents about the future of employment in the industry. In particular, they have referred to 1971, when Rolls-Royce was heavily exposed to the development costs of a single engine. In 1987 the company's strategy is somewhat different. The prospectus, which is available today, makes it clear that the

"principal objective in the civil aero-engine market is to be able to offer, either alone or in collaboration with other manufacturers, an engine to compete within each principal market sector."

There is no suggestion of over-reliance on a single development and the importance of collaboration is well recognised.

I must tell all hon. Members who spoke of anxiety about the future that the only guarantee that any commercial enterprise can have is of the success of its product through marketing, design and the ability to collaborate and to sell that product in international markets. There can be no guarantees, and there never have been any guarantees. Indeed, during public ownership 22,000 jobs have been lost from Rolls-Royce, so, far from there being any guarantees in the public sector, there appears to have been none. The reality has been that in the last 17 years Rolls-Royce has had to reduce its work force in order to remain competitive.

I wish that when the right hon. Member for Govan and his hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) make points about certain individual programmes, such as the V2500 engine and the Superfan, they would get their facts right. To describe the V2500 as the media did, and as some Members of the House have done, as a troubled programme is untrue. It is a development programme, which means that the engine has to be run and run until it gets to the point of destruction. It is not right to describe a programme such as that in those terms, and to say, as the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend did, that the Superfan programme has stopped, is not true. The programme has not stopped. What happened was that the international consortium IAE decided that it could not give a guarantee to have the Superfan engine available at a particular time, which meant that A340 airbus would be disadvantaged.

It is also not true for the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East, who I see is in his place now, to describe the Government's response to those two programmes, the A330 and A340, as miserly, or niggardly, or some such word, when it is widely known and recognised that the Government have already discussed with British Aerospace a sum of £400 million. I would not have thought that that was either a miserly or a niggardly figure, and the description is not deserved.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Pattie: As the hon. Gentleman has not been able to make a contribution to the debate, I shall give way.

Mr. Nellist: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. If the V2500 is doing so well, why has Pratt and Whitney taken over engineering control? If privatisation means that the company will be successful in the future, why have the Government had to write off £645 million of company debt? Finally, if privatisation is so attractive to the work force, why, over the last 12 months, has the company banned any discussion of privatisation issues by the workers and their unions inside the plant, while it spends a fortune on videos and luxurious surroundings to launch the programme? If privatisation is so wonderful, let us have answers to those three questions.

Mr. Pattie: I hope the hon. Gentleman realises that I have been generous to him. First, Pratt and Whitney has not taken over control of the V2500 programme. There have been some compressor problems, but Pratt and Whitney has not taken over control of the programme. No debt has been written off. If we had more time I would be able to explain to the hon. Gentleman the reasons for the mechanisms that have been used.

The videos are part of a process that I would have thought the hon. Gentleman would welcome. If nothing of that sort had been produced, the criticism would now be levelled that the management was not telling the work force anything. Indeed, that criticism was made at one time, but on asking the company what it was doing I discovered that there were regular weekly briefings in all the various plants to make the work force aware of exactly what was going on.

Mr. Terry Davis: The were one-sided.

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman says that they were one-sided. Is a briefing not normally one-sided?

Mr. Davis: The right hon. Gentleman has missed the point. If it is such an obvious case and it will persuade all the work force, why will the management not allow the work force to discuss it?

Mr. Pattie: I am talking about the ability of the management to inform the workers in the company of exactly what its plans are. At such meetings it is surely open to the work force to make their views known.

We shall have to wait and see, as several of my hon. Friends have said in this debate, how interesting the share offer is to the employees of Rolls-Royce. We have seen this situation before. I well remember the British Aerospace flotation, when the trade unions campaigned, as they are perfectly entitled to do, and said, in my constituency among others, that they hoped that their comrades would not be taking up the awful offer. Of course, when the time came the comrades took up the offer, as they were free to do. We know from the whole of the privatisation programme, going back to 1980, that there are now more than 480,000 employee shareholders. I should have thought that that was extremely good news. That surely is genuine public involvement and public ownership worthy of the name.

Mr. Park: My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) and I, with hon. Members from other parties, accompanied a whole series of delegations to Ministers—when the Minister was in the MOD—about providing help for the A320—repayable help, I might add. The offer that has been made on the A330/340 is less than half what British Aerospace reckons it needs. The danger is that the work will go to other Governments in Europe who are prepared to be more forthcoming.

Mr. Pattie: The amount that the Government advanced on the A320 was £250 million. Now we are talking about figures that are considerably in excess of that sum. Tonight we have not heard what the Opposition have to offer Rolls-Royce. We know that it is something called social ownership—a nice, modern, red-rose term for nothing less than renationalisation. Nobody will be fooled by that. Nationalisation means bureaucratic and political interference, over-manning, inefficiency, huge losses, and poor services to the customer. Privatisation, on the other hand, has extended share ownership and real employee participation, as was welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens).

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) paid tribute to the excellence of the Rolls-Royce management and work force. The efficiency and service to customers of newly privatised companies have increased enormously. The comments of my right hon. Friend are proof of that pudding. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said that all we seem to talk about are profits. The hon. Gentleman did not seem to realise that profits are a way of leading towards jobs. Without profits, there are no jobs.

Jaguar has produced 2,000 more jobs, 96 per cent. of BT employees own shares in that company, and the pressure of competition on British Telecom has meant that its prices have come down by 8·5 per cent. in real terms. That is the power of competition. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) reminded the House of the excellence of, and new-found pressure on, British Telecom. The fundamental proposition is: why should we not allow men and women in the country to own shares in major British companies? If we can do this and promote improved efficiency, competition and better services in these companies, the whole process will be successful.

The problem for the Opposition is that privatisation is a roaring success. They are stuck with their opposition to it. They know that wider share ownership will be to the 1987 election what wider home ownership was to the 1983 election. Unfortunately, they are stuck on the rock of that hard-left dogmatic Labour position. They cannot get off it. They know that they are on to a loser, but they cannot move. They are looking at privatisation, which the customer wants and which the management, the work force and the shareholding public also want. They look at all these things and say, "We know we are on a loser." I urge the House to throw out the motion.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 157, Noes 236.

Division No. 148] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
John, Brynmor
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McGartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Tony Lloyd.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Michael
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Michael
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Matthew
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hartford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Stansted Airport

10.12 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I beg to move,

That the draft Stansted Airport Aircraft Movement Limit Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 7th April, be approved.

In introducing the draft order, I think it worth remarking that this must be one of the most predictable, most unsurprising measures which could be brought before the House for its approval. The Government's intention to make an air transport movement—ATM—limit order for Stansted airport was signalled in June 1985, when we first gave the go-ahead to expansion there. The Government now seek to implement their intention and, in so doing, to fulfil the promise we made about phasing the development at Stansted.

The 1985 airports policy White paper expressed the Government's awareness of the genuine and understandable concern which had been expressed by local residents and Members of Parliament in the Stansted area about the scale and extent of development at the airport and about the environmental effects. The Government therefore promised that development of Stansted airport would be phased with the first stage of development limited to about 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum. A condition of the planning permission for Stansted airport to grow from current levels to about 15 million passengers per annum was that construction of the development would be so phased.

To underpin the planning condition we decided that the relatively blunt, unsophisticated instrument of an ATM limit could provide an additional means of regulating airport development, with the object of controlling the impact of that development on local infrastructure. We therefore undertook to seek the necessary powers to enable the Government to set ATM limits subject to the approval of Parliament. We made it clear that we would use such powers at Stansted to impose an ATM limit sufficient only to enable effective utilisation of the first phase of development, that is to say, about 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum.

The Government sought the necessary powers in last year's Airports Bill, and they now exist as section 32 of the Airports Act 1986. Section 32 restricts the use of ATM limit powers to airports where runway capacity is significantly underused. An airport whose runway capacity is already saturated has a naturally imposed limit. Section 32 also required the Secretary of State to consult within the civil aviation industry and among local authorities that are likely to be affected before setting a limit. That local authority interests are required to be consulted on the face of the legislation bears testamount to the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) and we are indebted to him. I am glad to see him in his place, as is usual when anything affects his constituency is debated.

The necessary powers came into force late last year. The Government are now keen to keep their promise for a first-phase ATM limit at Stansted—a promise that they gave when planning permission for Stansted development was given, in the 1985 airports policy White Paper, and during the passage of the Bill, both here and in another place.

The White Paper commitment to an ATM limit went beyond the reassurance of local interests — important though those interests may be. The White Paper said that decisions on a Stansted ATM limit should be for Parliament. The Government have again been faithful to their intention in bringing before this House tonight a draft order that is subject to affirmative resolution.

The order proposes a limit of 78,000 air transport movements. That figure is designed to correspond to a passenger throughput at the Stansted development of no more than about 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum. This is consistent with the planning condition and with the Government's subsequent investment approval for a terminal capable of handling 8 million passengers per annum. The figure, which has been calculated on my Department's most recent air passenger traffic forecasts, has been determined by two factors. The first of those is the relative mix of types of traffic that we expect to serve Stansted when passenger throughput approaches 8 million passengers per annum; and secondly, the average aircraft passenger loading — the number of passengers per air transport movement—at that time.

The figure of 78,000 ATMs assumes that all categories of traffic at Stansted will experience significant growth. The assumptions which underlie the calculation of the limit suggest that 8 million passengers per annum at Stansted would be composed of about 10 per cent. domestic passengers, 37 per cent. short-haul charter passengers, about 19 per cent. short-haul scheduled passengers and the balance — about 35 per cent. — of long-haul passengers.

The second element of the calculation, passenger loading, has been predicted by comparison with Gatwick. Given the similarities of Stansted now and Gatwick in its early years, it is not unreasonable to draw a parallel between the passenger loadings that might operate at Stansted when the airport development is handling 8 million passengers per annum and the passenger loadings at Gatwick when that airport had an identical passenger volume. Of course, the analogy is not precise. I have already been pressed on this matter by my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden, who represents this locality. I have no doubt that he will wish to have further discussions with me about that. The analogy is not precise and corrections have had to be made to allow for higher passenger loadings as a result of improvements in aircraft technology, and to eliminate any distortion from the passenger loadings on the Gatwick-Heathrow helicopter link which was in operation, when Gatwick was at 8 million passengers per annum.

In determining the quantum of the limit, we have tested the robustness of the figure against differing assumptions about both traffic mix and passenger loading. In particular, the limit has been tested against two scenarios, one of which puts forward rapid growth in short-haul scheduled services — reflecting extensive liberalisation and deregulation of air services—and a quite different scenario in which there is pre-eminent growth in the charter market — with short/medium haul charter passengers forming a much larger proportion of the 8 million passengers per annum. In both cases there was no significant difference from the 78,000 air transport movement figure of the central assumptions. Indeed, the agreement was within 1 per cent. This gives me great confidence to commend to the House the figure in the draft order.

The draft order is in five articles. The first two define the numerical value of the limit and its period of operation.

Although the limit would apply annually from 1 March of each year, it is proposed that the order should come into effect from 1 June this year. This will mean that one quarter of the first year of operation of the limit will have passed, but this loss will have no material effect. The current level of ATM usage of Stansted is less than 20 per cent. of the proposed limit and the existing terminal capacity will not allow traffic to approach the limit even distantly between now and February 1988.

Article 3 of the order describes those classes of aircraft movement that the Government propose to exclude from counting against the limit. In the 1985 White Paper the Government set out their undertaking to impose a limit expressly on ATMs at Stansted. During the passage of the legislation, we explained what an ATM limit would and would not cover, setting out explicitly that the limit would exclude diversion, repositioning, air-taxi and general aviation movements. The proposal reflects our White Paper undertaking about seeking to constrain passenger volume. It follows that the limit should bear on passenger air transport movements only.

I opened this debate by suggesting that this was an unsurprising measure for the Government to bring forward. I hope that I have now explained why. Our 1985 White Paper promised a limit on ATMs at Stansted so that the first phase of development should not handle beyond about 7 million to 8 million passengers per year. We promised to seek the necessary powers and did so in the Airports Bill. During the passage of the Bill we described in detail how a limit would operate and what it should and should not include. The Airports Act 1986 and the necessary powers are now in force and tonight we are fulfilling our promise to seek the House's approval to an appropriate limit. I commend the order to the House.

10.22 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The Minister opened the debate by saying that the order was both predictable and unsurprising. Predictable it may be, but I am not so sure about the second part of the Minister's description. It would probably be far beyond my limited capabilities as an orator to arouse the House to great heights of passion about this order, but I should like to mention one or two points. *[Interruption.]* "Heights of passion" would be the wrong phrase to describe some of the Conservative Members present for the debate. I should like to ask the Minister one or two questions, especially about the press release that was issued in conjunction with the order. Presumably that press release was issued in the name of the Minister. It says that "extensive consultation" was undertaken prior to the order being laid. The House would be grateful to know what sort of consultation the Minister regards as extensive. Certainly there are other aviation interests and other regional airports which feel that no such consultation has taken place. They rightly feel a good deal of concern that this order has been laid. Far from the consultation being extensive, it appears to have been localised to the area of Stansted airport.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): This is a deeply sensitive matter for Manchester airport, as my hon. Friend will appreciate, and for other airports outside the south-east of England. Would he agree that it is at once surprising and indeed culpable that the North of England Regional Consortium was not consulted on such an important matter?

Mr. Snape: In reply to my right hon. Friend, and to use the Minister's own words, it is predictable and unsurprising that the sort of interests that my right hon. Friend has outlined were not consulted. In view of the controversy that has surrounded the proposed development at Stansted airport, to say the least it is somewhat insensitive that the interests about which my right hon. Friend spoke have not been consulted. I have heard him speak many times about this in the Chamber so I know that he is aware of the concern of provincial airports such as Manchester about the proposed Stansted development.

Being aware of those concerns, one would have thought that the Minister would have consulted, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said, such bodies as the North of England Regional Consortium or the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities—JACOLA.

If the Minister wants to use the description "predictable and unsurprising" about orders such as this, one would have thought that he would have first sought extensive consultation with aviation and airport interests represented by both bodies to which my right hon. Friend and I have just referred. The Minister might well say that there is no statutory duty for a Secretary of State to consult regional interests, but, given the controversy that has surrounded this development, I repeat that one would have thought that, for the sake of peace and tranquillity in aviation, these consultations would have taken place. If they had taken place, there might well have been suggestions from bodies such as the North of England Regional consortium and JACOLA and there might well have been a slightly different approach to limiting ATMs at Stansted.

The Minister referred in his speech to section 32 of the Airports Act 1986, but the Act should be used not only to facilitate environmental objectives but to reinforce other policies such as traffic realloation. The bodies to which I have referred and the Opposition believe that Stansted's limit need not be based on the maximum throughput of its new terminal but perhaps could be laid on a gradual build-up of traffic reflecting the Government's traffic reallocation policy generally.

The Minister referred to the fact that Stansted's current capacity is less than 20 per cent., I think he said, of the proposed limit. If that is the case, why set the limit in this order tonight? It would be better gradually to step up the limit so that regional interests could express points of view over the next few months or even the next few years. That would be a more conciliatory and consultative approach than setting a limit in the order that allows the enormous development of which Stansted is currently not capable.

The order does have particular significance for controlling the incidence of long-haul traffic at Stansted. As I understand it, the order allows for up to 2·75 million passengers per annum of this type of traffic. I trust I speak for hon. Members on both sides of th House when I say that we would appreciate some indication from the Minister as to where this demand will originate and, if necessary, from what airports those 2·75 million passengers per annum will be transferred. As I am sure the Minister will concede, the output at Stansted since the announcement of its development has been growing modestly.

Opposition Members favour a limit on ATMs at Stansted which reflects the reality at present and which can be subject to review on a regular basis. That is not to say

[Mr. Snape]

that we want an enormously controversial debate, whether late at night or in prime parliamentary time, but I hope that the Minister will appreciate that these matters are fairly sensitive on the regions. While I understand that the Government's aviation policy appears to be devoted to solving the London problem at everybody's else's expense, surely it is not beyond the wit or inclination of the Department of Transport to appreciate the genuine concerns that are felt in areas outside London.

The Minister referred to positioning movements at Stansted. These movements are normally associated with inclusive tour operations which again, as he has indicated from the projected figures he has given, make up a high proportion of movements at Stansted. As the ATM limit excludes those positioning movements, as the Minister has rightly said, we can anticipate that about 5 to 10 per cent. more movements will be allowed over and above the limit. It is not for me to spend too long on the environmental implications for the residents in the Stansted area of the 5 to 10 per cent. increase over the proposed limit. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr Haselhurst) will do that himself — if not tonight, certainly at some time in the future. However, the question of positioning movements appears to be somewhat incompatible with the Minister's declared objective of protecting environmental interests in and around the airport.

I hope that the comments that will come from Opposition Members, despite the Minister's description of the order as "predictable and unsurprising" are, at least in his eyes and the eyes of those who advise him, unpredictable and surprising.

The proposed development at Stansted has been and is a controversial matter. There are legitimate concerns at Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and other airports in the United Kingdom. The Minister's comments so far, far from allaying those concerns, enhanced them. I hope that, in the same spirit as I have replied to the order, he will do something this evening to show that we can expect future debates on these matters so that those legitimate concerns to which I have referred can be expressed in the House and satisfactorily answered by a Department which, as I said earlier, somtimes appears to be more concerned with solving what it sees as the problems of London's airports than looking at aviation as the great national industry that it is.

10.32 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Despite the controversy to which the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) referred and in which I have been fully involved in the past, I want to make it clear that I extend a warm welcome to the order. It is somewhat ironic that I should do so because, as some of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members may remember, I spoke in a forthright sense on the question of the utility of a power to limit air transport movements when it was first raised in the Civil Aviation Bill which was introduced in 1984. Those arguments seemed to prevail at the time. Therefore, I accept that it is a quirk of fate that I now grasp the more specific power, agreed by the House in the Airports Act 1986, from which this order devolves. We were able to confine the power given in the Act in such a way that it is tailored to the specific case of Stansted.

The order is very specific. It is intended to deliver the Government's promise on the limitation of the development of Stansted in terms of size. As the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East surmised, the environmental quality around Stansted is of concern to me for the sake of my constituents and neighbouring constituencies. However, the order is aimed simply at the question of size rather than environment.

The Government made two suggestions to limit the size of the development of Stansted. The first was to say that the terminal to be built should not exceed 50,000 sq m and the second was to allow the House, by means of an air transport movement limit, to determine whether Stansted should be allowed to proceed beyond an approximate limit of 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum throughput. I accept entirely the Government's good faith in responding in that way and I accept the nature of the order tonight.

The House could exercise influence over the future of Stansted only through this type of order since the Government had chosen to use planning law to determine whether Stansted should be expanded. This was because they could say either yes or no to the plans presented to them. There was apparently no planning half-way house that the Government could opt for. Therefore, having given the legal planning permission for 15 million passengers per annum throughput, this device is needed to give the House the power to limit the number of passengers per annum to 7 million or 8 million. That is welcomed by my constituents and I trust that it is welcomed generally in the House.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The hon. Member has played a distinguished part in this long-running debate on the expansion of Stansted. He has talked about size, but how does he feel about the Government's ultimate objective of increasing the number of passengers through the airport to 25 million per year?

Mr. Haselhurst: It is not fair to suggest that the Government have an ultimate objective of increasing the number of passengers through Stansted airport to 25 million per annum. All that has been agreed to date is that planning permission exists for 15 million passengers per annum. The House will determine whether it proceeds beyond 7 million or 8 million passengers per annum. Any question of Stansted increasing to 25 million passengers, Gatwick increasing beyond 25 million or Heathrow increasing beyond the present 38 million or 40 million passengers will be debated in the wider context of airports generally. The Government do not have a stated policy on increasing passenger numbers but recognise that perhaps they will need to determine where further capacity is located. That would be a very wide debate.

I ask my hon. Friend to elaborate on the figure of 78,000 air traffic movements. When Gatwick reached approximately 8 million passengers per annum about eight years ago, that involved slightly over 100,000 ATMs. One accepts that some allowance must be made for increased load factors in the intervening years, and therefore is plausible that the figure of 78,000 equates with 7 million to 8 million per annum.

However, I notice that the press notice published by the Department, to which the hon. Gentleman for West Bromwich, East referred, says that the order would apply to about 16,000 movements per annum at Stansted at present. If one looks at the mathematics in another way, if that figure of 16,000 is correct now and if the present figure of approximately 550,000 passengers per annum is to be multiplied by only five, that would not take the figure very near to 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum. There is clearly much guesswork, and many alternative theories can be offered, in arriving at that figure of 78,000.

That difference between Gatwick in 1979, from over 100,000 down to 78,000, has interesting implications—I do not wish to cause palpitations to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground)—not least for the capacity of the terminals at Heathrow, if fewer movements are required to carry a larger number of people. We must look at this carefully. I accept that an honest attempt has been made on the breakdown of the figures to produce the figure of 78,000, but how will it work in practice? This is an untried device and the airport operators may be concerned if the calculations that have been made, albeit with full input from themselves, prove, in the event, to be wide of the mark.

One could envisage a situation arising within the course of the 12 months, when, after a particularly busy burst of traffic, which may be of rather small aircraft with low passenger load factors, pressure suddenly builds up and one runs out of movements. How often will my hon. Friend have to come back to the House to seek an amendment to this statutory instrument in order to deal with an unfortunate failure to predict the exact pattern of the build-up of development at Stansted?

We must be fairly cautious about this instrument. It is untried and untested and may lead to some difficulties in practice. The variables are considerable, as my hon. Friend has been honest enough to admit. I must tell the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East that, if, instead of fixing a figure for the intended maximum throughput at Stansted, a smaller figure should be chosen on a graduated basis, it would only compound the difficulties because the more one admits that the variables are suspect, the more trouble one would be in. If my hon. Friend came to the House and suggested a limit of only 20,000 or 25,000, we would soon be in considerable trouble. I understand the hon. Gentlemen's point, but that is not realistic. One must go for the maximum figure, as my hon. Friend has done, as long as one accepts that it may not be perfectly right. None of us can be sure how air traffic will build up. The

[Mr. Haselhurst]

House may be asked to amend this statutory instrument ahead of the time when it is asked to consider it in the light of the expansion of Stansted terminal, if that time comes.

The Government have decided to exclude general aviation movements from the calculation. I realise that the Government still have the power to include general aviation in the order if they wish, but have chosen not to do so. It is worrying to my constituents that general avaiation is not counted, particularly in the light of the obvious interest of Stansted Airport Ltd. in attracting its own good share of such general aviation business that is going. My constituents' fears in that respect may be exaggerated. I say that with some humility. General aviation movements tend to be of quieter aircraft which do not operate at anti-social hours, and while at the moment they represent a fairly significant proportion of the total number of movements at Stansted, I recognise that that proportion is likely to decline in future.

Nevertheless, I hope that my hon. Friend will give an undertaking to look at the position. It may be helpful and reassuring to people living in the area to have an early idea of the Government's proposals regarding noise limitation and sound-proofing schemes. It may be through that avenue that one can provide the environmental protection that would cover general aviation movements rather than through the mechanism of the statutory instrument that we are discussing. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that and realise that to some people aircraft movements are still aircraft movements even if they are not ATMs in the technical sense that we are discussing.

I appreciate the indulgence of the House while I have been making my points. If and when the time comes that the House is asked to consider raising the limit from 78,000, I hope that it will be recognised that that should not be confined to an hour-and-a-half's debate on a statutory instrument after 10 o'clock. If we reach that point, we shall be discussing the wider implications of Britain's airport policy and many hon. Members will wish to discuss that. I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will bear in mind the desire of hon. Members on both sides of the House from wide geographical areas to contribute to such a debate and that would not be possible in a debate such as we are having tonight. Having said that, I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the prompt manner in which the Government's promise has been fulfilled. I hope that the Minister's calculations are proved to be right in practice and that we can underline the protection and limitation for my constituents that the Government have promised all along.

10.45 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said that the order is the only way in which the House can influence, restrict or have some control over future developments at Stansted airport. On that basis, we should consider just how effective this order is. In previous debates on airports, during debates on airports legislation and during more general debates on airport policy, my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) has said that the appropriate level of passenger throughput at Stansted would be 5 million. The throughput implicit in the level of ATMs suggested in the order is between 7 million and 8 million. That exceeds my hon. Friend's figure. However, the figure in the order is substantially—almost 50 per cent. — lower than the approved planning permission figure that Parliament might be expected to approve in future to allow for such expansion. It is therefore important that we should have this opportunity to debate whether such expansion is desirable.

We must first consider whether such expansion is environmentally desirable. That matter must be of considerable interest to the constituents of the hon. Member for Saffron Walden. They have to bear the brunt of the aircraft noise generated by 78,000 movements in addition to the other movements not included in that figure. I agree with the hon. Member for Saffron Walden about the need to look for other ways — apart from limiting aircraft movements—to minimise the environmental impact on those who have to live under the flight paths into and out of Stansted and other airports.

My second point was hinted at by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), who said that we must consider how the aircraft movements and the passengers involved have a consequence for the general development of airport policy, not least for the importance that we and the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East attach to the development of airports in the regions in England and Scotland. Manchester airport has already been singled out as having considerable potential for attracting more traffic, and it has generated considerable support for its case for more traffic. It would be surprising if I did not put in a plea for the considerable future role that many Scottish airports have for international flights and in that regard I want to mention particularly the further marketing and development of Prestwick airport.

It is important that Parliament should have this opportunity to put some control over future developments at Stansted because, so many other consequences will follow from those developments with general regard to airport policy. It would also be fair to ask to what extent the order is effective in achieving that objective. The hon. Member for Saffron Walden rightly explained that there are a number of possible variables in this matter. The Minister referred to a number of ways in which the 78,000 air traffic movements relate to the level of expected passenger throughput.

What level of future development of domestic passenger transport does the Minister foresee for Stansted? It has often been suggested that, if Stansted airport is to secure its long-term future, one of our domestic airlines should have a base at the airport. Does the Minister share that view? Domestic airlines have fewer passengers, and if the expected passenger throughput is to be reached in the longer term, that would imply many more air traffic movements. That would obviously have environmental consequences, so it is something on which we would wish to have his views.

Mr. Haselhurst: One ought to put on record the fact that Air UK is a domestic airline that is trying to make Stansted its heart, and while at the moment its services are undertaken by fairly small-sized aircraft, it is expanding its network, so that point is met.

Mr. Wallace: I was just echoing a view that has been expressed in a number of places, that it is important for the development of the airport that at least one of our airlines—Air UK is not an insignificant one; it provides

a very valuable service in many parts of the United Kingdom—should have an important part at Stansted. It is a concern that has been expressed.

Dan-Air was very successful in the campaign that it mounted 12 months or more ago to maintain its service from Heathrow, because it felt that its services from other parts of the country—from Inverness airport, for the business and commercial interests of the highlands and islands of Scotland — should form the link with Heathrow and the important function of interlining that Heathrow provides. It would be a very serious loss if, through the auspices of the Civil Aviation Authority, some of these services were routed to other airports and that valuable interlining service was lost.

Dan-Air rightly won the argument. If that is a consideration, one may find that domestic services are not a common feature at Stansted and that, its growth area might be in charter traffic, with a much higher throughput of passengers. With 78,000 air traffic movements, if the number of passengers per movement was higher, would we then reach the situation where the Government were overshooting the current cut-off point of 7 million to 8 million passengers, with no further need to come back for an increase?

We do not know the answers to those questions, because there are so may variables, but, bearing in mind the importance attached to the procedure within the 1986 Act to give Parliament some control, we would like to hear more from the Minister. Without that, one could defeat one object of that Act — an object to which many speakers in the debate have subscribed—which was that Parliament should have some further control, because of the wider implications for other airports in the United Kingdom. If the Minister feels that there is a potential for the passenger ceiling to be significantly exceeded within 78,000 movements, that is something that hon. Members would, rightly, wish to know about, because it would have longer-term consequences for influence of the House on future airports policy.

10.52 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): My hon. Friend said that the order was predictable and unsurprising, but perhaps the speech of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was even more predictable and unsurprising. He took us through the letter from the North of England Regional Consortium and demonstrated that, even though he is very good at spreading these things out, it was just as thin an argument when he spoke about it as it is in the letter.

I do, however, agree with the hon. Gentleman on one point. It is a pity, but of no great significance in the event, that consultations were not wider and it would have been tactful if they had been. A lot of people put a lot of effort into the development of Stansted and made many representations. It would have been sensible to make the Government inquiries wider.

In effect, it does not seem to have made much difference because, as regards Manchester airport and the regional airports, the central issue is whether or not the limit imposed by this order is too large for the comfort of the regional airports. The consortium has not suggested in its letter or briefing that 78,000 ATMs are dangerous to the development of those airports. We are suggesting an order which will cover the period into the mid-1990s. Unlike the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East, I pay tribute to the Government for making great efforts to develop the regional airports, especially Manchester, and that should be put on the record. Moreover, they continue to do so.

The order is part of a package of measures put together at the time of approval of Stansted and designed to protect the interests of regional airports and to develop them. The order meets that promise and I thank the Government for properly and promptly introducing an order which meets that promise.

To take up the point of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), the order provides the House with a new and greater opportunity to control this area than it has ever had before. As I understand it, the control of the size of Stansted or any other airport does not come before the House, but the order and further additions to it give us an opportunity to keep some control over what happens in future.

The Government are to be congratulated on introducing the order. We shall keep a close eye on this and I make it perfectly clear to my hon. Friend the Minister that if there is any attempt to go beyond the 7 million to 8 million passengers on which the order is based, he had better not try to do so by an order late at night.

10.56 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): My constituency interest is considerably less acute than that of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst)——

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): And that of his hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford.

Mr. McCrindle: —and no doubt that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). The House will know that in the northern parts of my constituency a good deal of apprehension has been expressed about the prospective development of Stansted. Indeed, if one is honest, one has to say that the dissipation of that apprehension is a relatively slow process.

I seek the indulgence of the House for a brief period to express my approval of the order, but also to express some concern about the likely progress of this matter as we begin to move towards the true expansion of Stansted airport.

I approve of the order for two reasons. First, it confirms Government policy on the expansion of Stansted. Secondly, and more important, it reminds us that Stansted is not, and has no prospect of becoming in the immediate future, the full-blown, third London airport, for which many wished and for which pressure continues to exist.

I can say with some certainty that most of my constituents principally concerned with Stansted are coming to terms with some expansion, perhaps of the order proposed this evening, but the quickest way to recreate their suspicion and concern would be to move too quickly. Therefore, I draw to the attention of the House the proposals of a pressure group, the National Policy for Britain's Airports. It is perfectly understandable that this pressure group, comprising as it does local authorities which tend to repose particularly in areas immediately around Heathrow and Gatwick airports, should take the view that Stansted is the principal airport for the expansion of traffic in the London area. It is not expansion of the order that we are considering this evening, nor expansion up to 15 million, which would be the second

[Mr. McCrindle]

tranche of what may be called existing Government policy, but expansion to enable Stansted to handle 25 million passengers by the turn of the century.

I think that it would be appropriate for me to utter a word of warning to people such as the members of the National Policy for Britain's Airports, remembering, of course, how easy it is to suggest that airport expansion should take place in someone else's backyard, and that Stansted is not the only possible site for further runway expansion. I think that it would also be appropriate for me to remind that body that the maximum degree of expansion to which we are agreeing to this evening is 7 million to 8 million passengers. Even if we go forward to the second tranche, subject to parliamentary approval, we shall then be in the region of 15 million passengers. To envisage the possibility of 25 million to 30 million passengers is to contemplate airport developments around London to an extent that the Government have not yet undertaken. It really would be wise for bodies such as the National Policy for Britain's Airports to bear that very firmly in mind.

It may be that by 1995 the runway capacity in the London area will be inadequate, and a good case can be made for assuming that that will be so, but to assume the enormous growth at Stansted to which our attention has recently been drawn, involving not only 25 million passengers per annum but a second terminal, and quite possibly a second runway, is way outside the range of existing Government policy. To assume that this would be the easy solution to the problem of the expansion of airports in the London area would be quite wrong.

I do not deny that additional runway capacity may well become necessary, but I wonder whether sufficient consideration has been given to the possibility that instead of immediately assuming that that means that we must have an additional runway at Gatwick, Stansted or Heathrow — recognising, of course, the difficulty at Gatwick — there might be an argument along the following lines. If air traffic control in the United States, particularly around the Chicago and Los Angeles airports, can have an interval between landings and take-offs considerably shorter than that necessary around the London airports, consideration should be given to whether the Civil Aviation Authority could, with perfect safety, be persuaded to approve of rather more landings and take-offs at these London airports, so as to prolong the period at the end of which no doubt we would have to consider the possibility of further runway capacity around the London area.

It seems to me that those are considerations that should at least be given some thought, and I hope that the Minister will be prepared to turn his attention to that and possibly even say something about it when he responds to the debate this evening.

In essence, I rise this evening to express approval of the gradual expansion of Stansted. I have always accepted that there is a case for such expansion, but I believe that to go too far and too fast would be to risk reversing the growing approval, or at least acceptance, of this development, which I sense is now the state of play in the area immediately around Stansted.

I would very much welcome the development of more scheduled services from Stansted. If we are to have greater utilisation of that airport, I should like to think that many of my constituents would be able to use scheduled services from Stansted when travelling on business or otherwise, rather than, as is necessary at the moment, have to go to Heathrow or Gatwick. I am bound to say, however, that so far there is singularly little indication that scheduled services are developing at Stansted to anything like the degree that some of us might wish. I recognise that perhaps the most likely immediate use of Stansted is increasingly for charters. This may be necessitated by the growing difficulty of finding spots for charter airlines at Gatwick.

For whatever reason Stansted is expanded, I believe that there has to be a recognition of the fact that we can move only as far and as fast as will enable us to take local opinion with us. To go at this stage much beyond the proposal that is before the House in the order would be, in my opinion, to risk once again building up that state of opposition which my hon. Friends the Members for Saffron Walden and for Hertford and Stortford will readily recall was one of the principal difficulties during the many years in which Stansted was a major heartache for all three of us in relation to our constituency opinion.

The order is acceptable in that it is a reaffirmation of Government policy as we know it to be. If we can adhere to that parameter, we can carry public opinion with us. However, if the Government were tempted to go further and faster, we could open up the opposition which it has taken many of us a good number of years to play down, at least to some degree. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that the order sets out the extent to which we are able and interested in proceeding at present, and that if we plan to proceed further as time passes that movement will be subject to the procedures within the House as laid down when the Government's policy on Stansted was intimated some time ago.

11.6 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I welcome the order because it keeps a promise that the Government made to those who live around Stansted to limit the number of passengers who use the airport to 8 million per annum. It is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) has said, a feeble instrument, especially when it falls to be considered in an hour and a half's debate after 10 o'clock. I ask the Minister for an undertaking that any future increase of the limit will receive a full-scale debate in the House in prime time. That would be in line with the nature of the promise that the Minister and the Government gave to those whom I represent. Anything less would be a subterfuge, because the promise was that the Government would limit the number of passengers using Stansted to 8 million a year in the first phase, and that that phase would not be exceeded until and unless the House had given its approval. In my view that promise would be fulfilled only in the light of a full debate. That would give the opportunity for those who represent other airport areas, including Manchester, to raise the contentious argument why Stansted should be used for chartered aircraft. There is no reason why chartered aircraft movements could not take place at Birmingham, Manchester or Scottish airports. There is no need to fill Stansted with such movements.

I remind the Minister of other promises that have been given to the House on the expansion of Stansted. First, the

Government undertook that there would be no cross-subsidisation of Stansted by other London airports such as Heathrow and Gatwick. It seems that the promise has not yet been fulfilled because cross-subsidisation can take place under the umbrella of the British Airports Authority, which is to be privatised in July. In other words, Stansted will continue to lose money for many years hence. I am not certain that it will be making money even when it has 8 million passengers per annum. When it makes losses, they will have to be met by the profits declared by the authority's umbrella holding company. Thus cross-subsidisation will, in my view, be taking place. I should like an assurance from my hon. Friend the Minister that he will fulfill the Government's promise by some means.

We in Bishop Stortford have been promised that the Minister will limit the number of houses generated by the airport's expansion to 8 million passengers per annum to a proportion of that which was forecast in the public inquiry, which preceded the announcement of the Government's policy. Already Bishop Stortford has received applications from developers for more than 15,000 houses, which would double the size of the town within months of the new policy outlined by the Government. We are having extreme difficulty in resisting the pressure for development. Indeed, the Department of Environment is considering the means by which the Government will be enabled to fulfil their promise of a green belt round Bishop Stortford. That is the only means by which we could control the housing development resulting from the expansion in this order. So there are two more promises which I am looking to the Government to fulfil in the near future.

I am grateful that the Government have kept their pledge. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden, who has put much effort into making certain that the Government did keep their promise both in the Civil Aviation Bill that did not become law and in the Airports Act 1986. So I ask the Minister to ensure that his colleagues address these difficult questions, continue to fulfil the promises they have made and honour their good faith to the people of Bishop Stortford and my constituency.

11.11 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): This is a comparatively small country. Consequently, the activities of Stansted or any other south-eastern airport have an impact far beyond their own immediate environment. That is why the development and growth of Stansted up to and including this order have been of interest to, and have led to controversy for, northern Members and their constituents. My constituency of Bury, North is no exception.

I speak, therefore, as a man of Manchester airport, proud, like colleagues on both sides of the House, of the achievements of that airport over the past few years in enormous growth, more routes and more facilities. We have just seen the completion of a marvellous new hotel and the airport has a continually growing number of passengers. We all pay tribute to the excellent management of Mr. Gill Thompson and his team who perform such wonderful feats against a difficult and restrictive background such as the nonsense of international air travel, hedged around as it is by so many agreements, preventing the free commercial enterprise and development of airports and of airlines and their routes.

What effect, therefore, do restrictions and limitations on air traffic movements have beyond Stansted for airports such as Manchester? In so far as air traffic is geographically mobile, the limit at Stansted is to be welcomed by all who support regional airports, including Manchester. There is some such air traffic, but not much. Of much greater significance is the Government's responsible and supportive attitude to regional airports summed up in the most recent White Paper, about which Mr. Gill Thompson said that it put regional airport development policy where it should have been under the Labour Government when they published their White Paper. The order stems specifically from that policy. Therefore, the north will be grateful to the extent that its case has been recognised. To the extent that the limit acknowledges that, its voice has been heard.

But much more remains to be done, I caution the Minister that Manchester continues to watch carefully Stansted's growth and the performance of the Government and BAA. I said earlier that there was some mobility in air traffic movement, but not much. Most of the mobility is exercised by my poor constituents who have to climb into cars or buses to travel to different parts of the country to get flights that they would like to get from Manchester. That is the mobility that concerns them most. We used to see much more of that than we do today. The developments at Manchester under the general umbrella of the Government's regional policy have helped to improve the position. We are all most grateful for that.

That will change, not because of any relationship with the Government but because of the changes that are already taking place in the north. I believe that people will see the south-east for what it is—over-congested, over-developed and over-priced—and will realise that there is more to the north of England than they ever thought. As they move their businesses north, they will find a perfect vehicle for their international transactions on their doorstep, and in Manchester airport they will find the place that they need to help them to expand their businesses further. Those factors will determine the growth of regional airports in the future. I hope that we will find that the fears of Conservative Members about the expansion of Stansted and future orders will not need to be realised.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The hon. Member has spoken with high regard for Manchester airport. Does he not agree that the essential point is that the Government, by allowing a massive expansion of Stansted airport, are choosing the prosperous south-east against the claims of other regions, particularly those of the north-west?

Mr. Burt: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's argument. As I mentioned earlier, there is some geographically mobile air transport, but generally not very much. I do not believe that the argument that the south-east is suffering from a lack of air capacity and that therefore Stansted should not have been developed because traffic would have moved elsewhere outweighs the arguments for Stansted.

Our difficulty in the north is that at the moment many people want their businesses located in the south and need the extra air capacity of the south. Were that not so, it would please the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and myself, but it is a fact of

[Mr. Burt]

life and to have denied them that legitimate expansion and to have tried to hope or pretend that air traffic would have come to Manchester would be wrong.

I know that my hon. Friends are anxious to proclaim that we should tell people about the advantages of the north so that there will be a natural growth. As I was saying before the right hon. Gentleman intervened, in future, that natural growth will be stimulated by what is happening in the north of England. Thus, the fears of my hon. Friends about the expansion of Stansted and the possibility of orders coming to the south and raising air traffic movements will not be realised; the north will have grown sufficiently to counter any thought that Stansted must develop over-much. The answer to the problems of the north lies not in what is happening elsewhere but in a genuine boost to what is occurring in the north and a determination to tell people about it.

The future of Manchester airport is bright, not because of the Government or any control but because it is the right place and it will develop at the right time with the right people at the helm.

11.18 pm

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) asked me about the extent of consultation. In addition to the Civil Aviation Authority and the airport operators concerned, the Secretary of State consulted all aircraft operators that are presently flying out of Stansted and all the local authorities that are affected by the development of Stansted. Altogether, some 31 bodies were consulted.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East seemed attracted by the argument that we should seek to force users to go further north by imposing an artificially low limitation. I shall come back to that argument, if that is what the hon. Gentleman was trying to say, because I do not believe that it is in the interests of Manchester or anywhere else that operators should be driven there rather than attracted.

Mr. Snape: That is not what I was implying. I agree whole-heartedly that operators should be attracted rather than driven to airports such as Manchester or Birmingham. I was seeking to make a point that was made rather effectively by the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) which is that all too often, provincial passengers are driven to London because of the Government's general airports policy. I was seeking to redress that balance. I also made a point about consultation, which did not refer to operators of provincial airports. I hope that, in the spirit in which I made my speech, the Minister and his Department will give some consideration to seeing that those authorities are consulted in future.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is making a valid point when he speaks about the extent of consultation. It should stretch somewhat more widely and that is a fact that I have taken on board.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about not including other movements than passengers; this point was made rather more extensively by my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst). I will reply to that point when I deal with his speech.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked whether one of our domestic airlines would be based at Stansted, and whether this was desirable. I understand that Air UK is developing there, and I hope that it will be successful in doing so. He also asked me what percentage of air traffic movements were domestic flights. The figure is approximately 10 per cent. The Government showed their belief in regional aviation when they decided to reject the CAA advice last year to displace some domestic regional flights from Heathrow, including the Inverness route. In calculating the limit, we took account of the growth of domestic regional services and we found the limit of 78,000 insensitive to especially rapid growth in such services. I hope that I have reassured the hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) made a number of interjections, and I thought, if he will forgive me for saying so, that he was being slightly mischievous in suggesting that there was a plan to put in a 25 million passenger movement per annum limitation before long. The fact is that there is a 15 million passengers per annum limitation and we should recognise that.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I appreciate that there is a 15 million passengers a year limitation. Is it not the ultimate objective to go to 25 million passengers a year?

Mr. Mitchell: Such things are so far off that I doubt whether we shall be sitting across the Chamber arguing the toss when they become reality. It is not realistic to try to forecast that far ahead at what point there will be any need to exceed even the 8 million passengers that we expect to get from the 78,000 ATMs limitation. We then get the further stage of limitation imposed by the initial planning consent for 15 million passengers a year. The right hon. Gentleman is, it is not wholly unreasonable to say, being a bit mischievous.

Mr. Alfred Morris: According to the inspector's report is it not totally reasonable to suspect that the ultimate will be 25 million passengers a year?

Mr. Mitchell: I believe that it is unreasonable for the right hon. Gentleman to talk about the ultimate when we are talking today about a limitation of 7 million to 8 million passengers and the prospect, in the far future, of a total limitation of 15 million. The right hon. Gentleman and I will be older and have greyer hair before that latter limitation is reached.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) called for wider consultation. I believe that that is a valid point, and we shall take it on board. My hon. Friend recorded the extent of Government direct encouragement to regional airports, especially Manchester. It may be helpful if I demonstrate the validity of that argument.

Since 1979, the Government have authorised no less than £220 million of capital expenditure at local authority airports. That should be compared with the previous Labour Government's authorisation of £16 million. The contrast between those figures gives a pretty good definition of the extent to which this Government have supported the regional airports when compared to the support offered by the previous Labour Government. My hon. Friend asked whether this order is unique in that it gives the House of Commons an on-going control. I understand that my hon. Friend's assumption is correct.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North recognised that the Government have remained true to their support for the regional airports. The growth of Manchester international airport is a success story. Manchester is attracting more traffic because of its location and its services. Those features, rather than the refusal to sanction growth elsewhere, are the determinants of growth.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) supported the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden for a full debate if there is any change in the position and there comes a point when we move nearer the figure of 15 million passengers per year; consent for that figure has initially been given. The time for debates in the House is a matter for the Leader of the House and the usual channels. I am sure that, in years hence, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford will be sitting in his place at Business questions—perhaps a little older and with less hair—to ask the Leader of the House to ensure that he gets the time that he want for a debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford asked for an assurance that the no-subsidisation undertaking will be carried out. Cross-subsidy is not entirely outlawed. Stansted, though a sound business in the long term, is expected to make losses in the early stages of its capital development parallel to the regional airports. The key point is that the Civil Aviation Authority has powers under the Airports Act 1986 to prevent any cross-subsidy leading to pricing policies that harm or are intended to harm another airport's business—predators pricing. In addition, the accounts conditions applying to British Airports Authority airports under the Act require any type of cross-subsidy to be made transparent in the airport's company accounts.

Mr. Snape: The Minister will be aware that what he has just said has particular significance for airport development. In some ways his remarks conflict with the assurances that were given during the passage of the Airports Act 1986. Although it is rather late in the day to reconsider this matter, we, and I suspect some Conservative Members, will wish to study carefully the Minister's remarks tonight to judge whether they equate or conflict with the specific pledges given by Ministers during the passage of the Airports Act.

Mr. Mitchell: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I phrased my remarks carefully. He will find that there is no conflict between what I have said and what my colleagues have said at the appropriate times.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford raised the matter of housing. I understand his point, but it is more a matter for the planning authorities who have control over these matters than it is for the Department of Transport. My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden welcomed the instrument and recognised that it was the fulfilment of a Government promise. He asked me a number of penetrating questions and I shall do my best to answer them.

First, my hon. Friend asked how it was that at Gatwick there were 102,000 air traffic movements to provide for 7 million to 8 million passengers a year, while at Stansted the same number of passengers appear to be provided for by only 78,000 air traffic movements. He asked if I could explain that quite remarkable difference, and I can. At the time when Gatwick was developing some years ago, aircraft were much smaller than they are now. Therefore, more aircraft were required to carry the same number of passengers. The larger aircraft in service today compared to the aircraft in use at the opening of Gatwick are a major reason for the difference. At Stansted, more passengers can be carried per aircraft.

The other significant factor is that there was a helicopter link between Gatwick and Heathrow. That helicopter counted as an air traffic movement, but it might have carried only four or five people at a time. Therefore, it accounted for a significant number of air traffic movements for very few people. I hope that that clarification helps my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend also asked me what about what would happen if, during the course of a year, it suddenly appeared that the number of air traffic movements will exceed the limitation before the year was out. In that case I am quite sure that I or my successors in the Department of Transport will find the operator from Stansted knocking on the door and asking for parliamentary time for the passage of an order similar to the one that we are debating.

My hon. Friend asked whether the exclusion of general aviation would leave a big loophole in the system. I can tell him that that will not happen. Last year there were 4,337 all-cargo movements at Stansted, including mail flights, but of those only 584, or less than 14 per cent., were jet aircraft. The vast majority, over 86 per cent., were small and relatively quiet aircraft. Therefore, he need not feel unduly worried about that point. I give him the undertaking that I will, as he asked, keep this matter under review.

My hon. Friend asked about noise limitation. In the general sense, noise standards have recently been considerably developed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, in which the United Kingdom plays a leading role. From 1 January 1988, British registered subsonic jets unable to meet basic standards, that is to say, non-noise-certified aircraft, have been banned from United Kingdom airports. From 1 January 1988, foreign registered subsonic jets unable to meet the basic noise standards will also be banned. That means that the noisiest aircraft will not be around; that will be a great relief to people living in the vicinity of our airports.

My hon. Friend's next question was about insulation. He is perceptively feeling around the area of ways in which his constituents may be affected by the increasing use of the airport. A noise insulation grant scheme will be in place by the time the passenger throughput reaches 2 million per year, and that is a long way down on the limitation that we have before us. Noise limits will be fixed for aircraft departing by day and by night, the noise level standards for night departures will be lower and the noise levels will be monitored. The new night restrictions for Stansted will reflect the outcome of the present review of night restrictions at Heathrow and Gatwick, taking into account local circumstances.

Hon. Members asked about a full day's debate, should a revision of this instrument be necessary. My answer must be the answer I gave earlier to another question: that hon. Members are likely to be a little greyer, perhaps a lot greyer, by the time that situation arises.

Mr. Snape: If greyness of hair is any criterion in these matters, may I ask the Minister to say how many of these instruments he has dealt with over the years?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman need not feel any anxiety in that direction. Perhaps a little thinning may be the cause of his concern.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) raised a number of wider and important issues about the distribution of scheduled services. I will draw his comments to the attention of the Under-Secretary with responsibility for aviation and ask him to write to my hon. Friend on the subject.

I agree strongly with my hon. Friend about the need to carry local opinion, and I trust that the order succeeds in doing that. It fulfils promises made to the people in the Stansted area to impose a strict limit, and I hope that my hon. Friend will feel content about that.

We have sought to fulfil the undertakings and promises given at earlier stages when this matter was very controversial, and we have done that in two ways. The first is by a condition in the planning consent that the terminal should be of such a size that it could handle only 7 million to 8 million passengers a year. The second is by the ATM limit, as a further reassurance to local residents and to the House. For those reasons, I hope the House will now feel able to agree to the order.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Stansted Airport Aircraft Movement Limit Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 7th April, be approved.

PETITION

Whales

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I beg to present a petition for a worldwide limit on the number of whales being killed to prevent them from becoming extinct.

The petition comes from nine and 10-year-old schoolchildren of Davidson's Mains primary school and it is the petition of Michael Williams on behalf of the school. It has been signed by 240 schoolchildren.

They are horrified by the brutality associated with commercial whaling and feel that the present protection afforded to whales does not yet go far enough.

This is a commendable cause, and I am sending copies of the petition to the ambassadors of Japan, the Soviet Union and Norway, so that they may give it serious consideration.

I am glad to be associated with this enlightened conservationist campaign, which I wish every success.

To lie upon the table.

Senior Colman Engineering Ltd., Cheshire

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I am grateful for this opportunity to refer to the Senior Colman Engineering company in Sale, Manchester, which is not a large engineering firm. While this dispute involves only 112 workers, those people are important, as is the issue involved. Indeed, the issue is as important as that facing any large factory, such as a Ford plant in the motor car industry.

First and foremost, I will explain my involvement. I am the secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union parliamentary A group. I have been requested by our national secretary and by the district committee to expose some of the disgraceful details appertaining to this district.

The dispute commenced on 16 January and it developed into a serious confrontation because of the sheer arrogance and unreasonableness of the company. Also, I should add, the company did not follow the agreed procedure that is laid down. The Government often tell workers to act responsibly but we very rarely hear them telling managements to act responsibly and to behave themselves in respect of the terms and conditions of their workers. It is interesting to be talking about industrial relations because I read a report in *The Times* dated 23 April about a speech by Lord Young on industrial relations in which it was said:

"the Government was on the right lines with its industrial relations policy . . .

He told a CBI conference in London that no Government could legislate good industrial relations into being but since 1980 there had been extensive consultation and a step-by-step approach towards a legal framework which, he said, was fair, realistic and suitable for both the economy and society.

Lord Young said proposals in the Green Paper 'Trade Unions and their Members' shared a common central theme: Promotion and protection of the democratic rights of trade unionists as Members of their trade unions."

This policy falls far short when we examine the circumstances of this dispute. All kinds of measures to control trade unions are advocated by Government Ministers but it is noticeable that there are no penalties when we experience what I term rotten companies. We often talk about training courses and I think that it would be money well spent if we introduced training courses for good company management, because it is recognised that there are failures in this area.

The dispute arose because the management victimised four workers. There was an immediate factory mass meeting. Arising from the meeting a secret ballot was taken at which 110 workers voted for immediate strike action and two workers voted against. The Government are supposed to favour secret ballots and responsible trade unions. I think the Minister would agree that this was an overwhelming determination that there was a grievance. An AEU official went to the company and appealed for some reasonableness and asked it to observe agreed procedures. But, following discussions, he finally registered a failure to agree.

There have been further attempts to conciliate in this matter and my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), who is the chairman of the AEU parliamentary group, wrote two letters. He wrote to Senior Colman and the Paymaster General. From the management of Senior Colman there was a rather curt reply, little better than one paragraph, which said:

"It was kind of you to write to offer your assistance in trying to bring about an end to the dispute in Sale. The matter is being handled by the local management and I have passed your letter on to them."

That is the concern and response from the management.

The Paymaster General also replied to my right hon. Friend. I shall take one or two brief extracts from the letter. He referred to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. He said:

"ACAS has been in touch with both parties and remains available to help them reach a settlement."

He went on to talk about jobcentres. I hope that the Minister will take note of one paragraph in which the Paymaster General said that jobcentres

"must . . . be seen to be neutral . . . and must not take action that might make matters worse."

He went on to say that on 22 January the employer had informed the jobcentre that the strikers had been dismissed and that the AEU district secretary had informed the jobcentre that the dispute was declared official. The letter goes on to admit that a Mr. Yendley, the regional manager for the employment service in the north-west, decided only four days later, on 26 January, to resume advertisement of the vacancies.

It is our contention that the Manpower Services Commission should not in any way act on behalf of companies to recruit scab labour. I am sure that there was a contradiction when the Paymaster General said that jobcentres must remain neutral. If they were to remain neutral they would not have taken any part in the recruiting of labour.

I shall now deal with the real dirty work that has been carried out by the company. I think that hon. Members will say that it is practically beyond belief in the 20th century. Four of the strikers happen to be deaf and dumb. The management arrogantly proceeded to attempt to intimidate them. They gave an ultimatum by telephone to the homes of those four handicapped people saying that unless they returned to work within one hour they would be sacked. It also told them that because of their disability they would probably never work again. In addition to that there is a management scoundrel who visited a home to see the wife of one of the deaf and dumb strikers while he was on picket duty.

It is obvious that the management was trying to use the handicap as a weapon. In view of all that, I think that the management representative is worse than a scroundel; he is nothing less than a management leper. What about equal opportunities for the handicapped? If those people had been black or women they would have been able to take proceedings, and fines would have been imposed on the company. It appears that because they are handicapped there are no penalties that can be imposed on the company.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) reflected on that problem and said that he would try to introduce some legislation to encompass protection for such people. However, at the time the Government said that there was no need for any further legislation and that it was their belief that there should be a process of education and exhortation of the management to encourage it to behave in a responsible way. It has hardly been acting responsibly. It is obvious that we need legislation. In view of the management's conduct we should label all the products of Senior Colman Ltd. in Manchester with the words "industrial lepers",

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

because that is what the firm and management are. They are prepared to go to any limit to intimidate the workers to go back to work.

It would be useful tonight for the Government to remind employers of some of their social responsibilities. I wonder how it is that companies from countries such as Japan can come over here and make a success of managing and co-operating with the work force, yet British employers—this employer is not isolated—can wreak havoc and go mad without any sanctions for pursuing ruthless policies. I ask the Minister whether he approves of this and whether the Government support it. I plead with the Minister to give an assurance that he will instruct the MSC not to interfere in a legitimate dispute which has arisen because of the sheer incompetence and arrogance of the management of this factory.

I ask the Minister to condemn the management for its conduct and to give a lead by requesting the company to go to ACAS. We, as trade unionists, encourage the workers to respond responsibly; to go to ACAS, get around the table and resolve this unnecessary and hurtful dispute which is a disgrace and is causing concern in the north-west. I assure the Minister that this dispute will not go away; it will fester for some time. The whole trade union movement in greater Manchester is appalled and up in arms about what is going on. The north-west is asking for some lead from the Minister. I appeal to the Minister to co-operate. If he will co-operate, we shall certainly co-operate in reaching a satisfactory resolution. I appeal to companies to introduce new thinking and new policies for resolving disputes between management and workers.

11.52 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Gentleman have the agreement of the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) to intervene in the debate?

Mr. Eastham: Yes.

Mr. Churchill: I am much obliged to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham). The company in question is in my constituency. In this case, as in many others, there are two sides to the dispute. I am quoting from a document, which states:

"The factory became unionised three years ago and has maintained a stable workforce. The Company in its long history has never witnessed a strike. Never that is until now. It is with genuine regret that that record has now been blemished."

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): From what document is the hon. Gentleman quoting?

Mr. Churchill: I understand that it bears the stamp "AUEW Manchester".

My understanding is that the company decided that it was time to computerise its production records and, in consequence of that, it approached the senior shop stewards' committee and discussed its proposals for a new form of time sheet so that it would meet the requirements of the computer software. After several requests, the company dismissed four of its employees for misconduct — failure to comply with what it regarded as a reasonable instruction. Therefore, the employees went on strike and after three or four official warnings the strikers were dismissed.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): What was the instruction?

Mr. Churchill: The instruction was that they should complete the new time sheets instead of the old time sheets, not an onerous imposition. It is about time that the trade union movement, including that in the Manchester area, started living in the modern age of computers and working to co-operate with management to maximise production instead of objecting at every turn.

Mr. Lloyd *rose*——

Mr. Churchill: I am sorry, but I have been granted only a couple of minutes. The hon. Gentleman may catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The company then proceeded, having warned the strikers and given them official notice, to recruit a new labour force.

I do not accept the criticism of the hon. Member for Blackley of the MSC manager, Mr. Yendley——

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Member for Blackley had his full chance to deploy the union case. I would be obliged if the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) would allow me to make what I hope will be only a brief intervention.

On 12 February the hon. Member for Blackley quoted a letter from the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), which said that Mr. Yendley had been actively assisting the company——

Mr. George Howarth *rose*——

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Gentleman is not on the picket line now.

—in recruiting workers while an official dispute was taking place. However, my understanding is that once the dispute was made official no more recruiting took place. The union took a considerable time to make the dispute official and by that time the company had already recruited through the MSC.

Mr. Ron Brown *rose*——

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Member for Blackley referred to the four deaf and dumb employees, about whom great play has been made and who, it is said, were treated disgracefully. Let me quote from a letter from the mother of one of those deaf workers. I shall not identify her by name, but she said:

"I am writing on behalf of my son who is deaf . . . he left home at 6.45"—

this is once the strike had started and he wanted to attend the factory to keep his job—

"to pick up"—

his friend—

"on his motorbike to get to work but they could not get through. Thursday morning I got up at six o'clock to make him a flask of tea and a sandwich in case he couldn't get anything while at work. He left home at quarter to seven, as he said he was walking . . . but still didn't get in and was told to stop outside."

It is clear that at least that individual wanted to get to his place of work and it was the union picket that prevented him from doing so. When he was dismissed, the AUEW was responsible—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There should be no sedentary interventions.

Mr. Churchill: The AUEW was responsible, and he did not lose his job of his own volition.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, when he replies to the debate, will bear in mind that the account presented by the hon. Member for Blackley was very much an ex-parte affair. As he made clear, in the House he is a distinguished representative of the AUEW, and he is entitled to that. However, several members of the work force certainly wanted to attend for work, but were prevented from doing so by pickets from the hon. Gentleman's union.

12 midnight

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): We have perhaps had the liveliest debate of the day during this Adjournment debate. First let me congratulate the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) on his speech and acknowledge the patently sincere and deeply felt concern which led to his wish that this matter should be debated in the House. We have also heard the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) who put the case for the other side of the dispute.

I must say straight away that it is, of course, always sad to see people lose their jobs — but in any individual situation the question whether to take industrial action is entirely a matter for the employees to decide. Holding a ballot before industrial action gives union members the opportunity to think about the possible consequences and decide for themselves whether they are willing to take the risks involved. Strikes invariably put jobs at risk—either immediately, as in this case, or as a result of the longer-term damage that they can do to the company concerned.

There may be some confusion over the question of immunity and the protective effect of a ballot before strike action. Let me try to clarify the point. The Trade Union Act 1984 made it a condition of immunity that before calling a strike or other industrial action, a trade union must obtain the support of its members through a secret and properly conducted ballot. Trade union immunities, however, protect those who persuade others to break their contracts, not those who, by going on strike, break their own contracts.

The law has never protected people's jobs when they breach their contracts by going on strike. In those circumstances, the employer has always had the right to regard the employment contract as terminated. However, it protects strikers against selective dismissal and victimisation. The basic principles of the legislation governing dismissal in a strike have remained unchanged since 1971. When statutory protection was first introduced — they are to allow the dismissal of all workers on strike, but to give protection to those selectively dismissed, and to those not re-engaged when others are. That is the position on unfair dismissal in relation to industrial disputes.

With regard to the conduct and resolution of disputes, it is not the Government's job to intervene in individual disputes, but rather to establish a sound legal framework in which employers and employees can shoulder their own responsibilities. The resolution of disputes is essentially a matter for employers and employees themselves, with the assistance, if they wish to have it, of the independent Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, which always stands ready to provide any help it can to the parties in any dispute. I understand that ACAS has been in touch with both parties in this dispute and remains available to help them reach a settlement. In addition, if any of the employees dismissed feel that they have a legitimate claim of unfair dismissal against their employer, they have the right to apply to an industrial tribunal—though it will, of course, be for the tribunal to interpret the law in each particular case.

I now want to consider the involvement of the Manpower Services Commission's jobcentres in recruitment for certain jobs at Senior Colman Ltd. following the dispute which I think is the central point of concern for the hon. Member for Blackley.

I think that it is important——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the Minister answer one question? Will he confirm that my hon. Friend's point that 110 members voted in favour——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have two hon. Members on their feet at the same time.

Mr. Lee: With great respect, I am operating on a very tight deadline because I have given a proportion of my time to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme. It was up to the hon. Member for Blackley to give his colleague the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) a proportion of his time. I shall use my time in my own way.

What happened in this case, I understand, is that Senior Colman Ltd. asked the jobcentre at Altrincham to service vacancies for the jobs of the four workers initially dismissed, and the employer told the jobcentre manager privately that there was a possibility that he might need her help to fill a further 106 vacancies if the rest of the work force did not respond to an ultimatum to return to work or be dismissed. On 22 January the employer told the jobcentre that those still on strike had been dismissed, and asked the jobcentre to fill the resulting vacancies.

Mr. George Howarth: Answer the question.

Mr. Lee: Perhaps when the hon. Member has been in the House a little longer he may understand how Adjournment debates are conducted.

MSC staff, following standing guidance, waited a few days to provide a cooling-off period and then sent about 140 people to the firm for interview, after warning them about the industrial dispute. After interviewing, about 90 were placed. On 28 January the employer informed the jobcentre that all vacancies were filled. Since then, the jobcentre has had no contact with the firm.

All the action taken by the jobcentre in question, and its regional management, was entirely in line with the tried and tested procedures that have governed the employment service's handling of job vacancies during a trade dispute for many years now. It may help if I explain what these procedures are, and what are the principles underlying them.

Jobcentres have a general duty to provide a service for employers and people looking for work. Under the Employment and Training Act 1973 the Manpower Services Commission is charged with an equal responsibility to employers and Job seekers. This means that it must be neutral in all matters relating to the provision of services. This stance must apply to industrial disputes, even though in practice it is difficult for the employment

[Mr. Lee]

service to appear to all concerned to be acting in a neutral way. If jobcentres service vacancies for an establishment affected by a dispute, unions often take the view that help is being given to the employer. If jobcentres refrain from servicing these vacancies then employers may well complain that the jobcentre is supporting the employees.

The policy is therefore to treat such job vacancies as normally as possible, but with the important distinction that intending applicants are informed that a dispute is in progress so they can decide for themselves whether to apply for employment. If the vacancies have arisen directly because of a withdrawal of labour, action to fill the jobs may be suspended for two days, or longer in exceptional circumstances, to allow a cooling-off period to see whether the dispute may be resolved in the meantime and a confrontation avoided, and to make sure that there are real vacancies on offer rather than just the threat of dismissals as a negotiating ploy. This is exactly what happened with the Senior Colman vacancies at Altrincham jobcentre.

One very important aim of these carefully considered procedures is to try to ensure as far as possible that the Manpower Services Commission does nothing which could be regarded as exacerbating a dispute, or worsening industrial relations within the firm involved. Another important concern is, of course, the practical question of personal risk to job seekers who apply for vacancies and have to cross picket lines. The procedures are designed with these factors very much in mind, and have been looked at again very recently to ensure that we, and the MSC, still regard them as the best way to deal with what can be very delicate situations.

I hope that what I have said will reassure the Member for Blackley that the procedures that the Manpower Services Commission puts into practice in these sorts of circumstances are long-standing, fair and sensible, and that they were operated reasonably in the case of this particular dispute at Senior Colman Ltd.

Let me sum up then what the jobcentre did and why it did it. It was notified of around 100 vacancies in a company where the employer was threatening to dismiss all those who were on strike. The jobcentre staff concerned, following their standing guidance, decided to take no action on the vacancies for a few days, during which ACAS was consulted as to the genuineness of the vacancies and the prospects for a settlement. When it became clear that there——

The Motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, Mr. Deputy Speaker *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eight minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 29 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Japan

1. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he has achieved in securing wider access for British exports to the Japanese market.

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the trade deficit with Japan; and if he will make a statement.

17. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he has achieved in securing wider access for British exports to the Japanese market.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): In the year ending February 1987 the United Kingdom visible trade deficit with Japan was £3·8 billion. Some progress has been made. I am glad to say that in 1986 United Kingdom visible exports to Japan increased by 18 per cent. to £1·26 billion.

Mr. Caborn: Will the Secretary of State tell the House what progress has been made since he dispatched his Minister to Tokyo a few weeks ago with "a timetable in his pocket for the opening up of the Tokyo stock exchange"? First, was a timetable negotiated there, and, if so, what was it? If it was not negotiated, will the Secretary of State use the powers that he now has under the Financial Services Act?

The right hon. Gentleman has informed the House that the trade deficit with Japan was £3·8 billion, but in 1979 it was about £882 million. The position is worsening. Will the Secretary of State tell the House what action he will take to protect British industry?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman's question relates to two points. On the general trading front, the figures are inflated by the present strength of the yen. The House must understand that the figures are changing. As the yen appreciates, in cash terms the figures look larger at the beginning. In terms of volume, that will change as the value of the yen changes. It is mildly encouraging that British exports increased last year by more than those of any other Western European country.

As for my hon. and learned Friend's visit to Tokyo —and the hon. Gentleman's question relates entirely to financial services—he did indeed lay down a timetable for the opening up of the Tokyo stock exchange. There will be further financial talks at the end of the next month, and we have made it clear that we will use our reciprocity powers under the Financial Services Act if we have to. My hon. and learned Friend has already achieved a considerable moving forward of the Japanese Government's timetable for opening up the Tokyo stock exchange, and he is to be thoroughly commended for that.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Secretary of State agree that there is now a real danger of a diversion of Japanese exports to the EEC following tariffs being imposed by the United States? Can he give some indication of the Government's attitude to the proposals of Commissioner De Clercq this week on behalf of the Commission, and of what measures he thinks we can take to ensure that our financial institutions have access into Japan and to deal with the anti-dumping problem? The Government have not yet made their position clear on that.

Mr. Channon: On the anti-dumping point, we are strongly in favour of effective action to stop so-called screwdriver operations, and we shall support effective steps to that end. On the question of the Financial Services Act, I do not think that I can add much to my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn). The problem relates to the Tokyo stock exchange, and I have described that. As for trade diversion because of the American tariffs, there is a real risk of that. Commissioner De Clercq and the British Government have been working very closely together on the problem. We strongly support the Commission's proposals. If goods are diverted from the United States to the European Community, we shall take action, I hope within the next two or three weeks.

Mr. MacKenzie: Will the Secretary of State accept that those of us who represent constituencies where electrical appliances are manufactured are bitterly disappointed at the lack of progress on trading with Japan? It has gone beyond being a normal diplomatic incident. May I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman asks the Foreign Secretary formally to call in the Japanese ambassador and express to him in the strongest possible terms that we have completely lost our patience?

Secondly, is there not a great deal to be said for taking a leaf out of the book of our French partners and treating Japanese goods in precisely the same way as the French Government have been doing for some time?

Mr. Channon: I have some sympathy with what the right hon. Gentleman said in the first part of his question. The Japanese ambassador is well aware of the Government's views, and he is also aware of the views of the House of Commons. I shall, I hope, be taking more effective steps than that. I am to see the Ministry of International Trade and Industry Minister, who is coming to London. I shall be having a meeting with him tomorrow, and on that occasion I shall convey to him what the right hon. Gentleman has said. There has been some exaggeration of the extent of what the French have done in the last few days. They have imposed duties on frozen Coquille St. Jacques and on a Japanese fish dish. Whether that will strike terror into the heart of the Japanese Government must be open to doubt.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend make it absolutely clear that we are complaining about the unfairness of trade between Japan and this country? We want there to be full and fair trade, and we want it to be expanded. Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that that is the general view of the Government, and not that there should be an overall restriction of trade?

Mr. Channon: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend. We want to open up the Japanese market to British goods, not to close the British market to Japanese goods. If we have to take action, either with our Community partners or, where we have to do so, on our own, that, though regrettable, may have to be done. I understand that the general aim in all parts of the House is to open up the Japanese market. I do not disguise from the House that that is extremely difficult, but some progress is being made.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the few notes of caution in an otherwise very encouraging quarterly survey that was published yesterday by the CBI relates to the prospect of a world trade war? Therefore, will my right hon. Friend proceed with great caution when considering possible measures against Japan? What is proposed could be very counter-productive. What we need are specifically targeted measures.

Mr. Channon: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. If he is referring to financial services, we have a whole range of powers. If we took action under the reciprocity powers, we would choose specifically targeted measures that we thought were very much in British interests, in order to make sure that the action that we were taking helped Britain.

As to the question of a world trade war, I could give many examples. We have a whole range of powers relating to financial services, of which the House is well aware, from the refusal of extra licences to the removal of institutions that are operating in this country. One could take any precise example between those two. If my hon. Friend cares to put down a question, I shall try to answer it. A world trade war would be a disaster for this country, which depends so much on exports. Incidentally, it would also be a disaster for the Japanese.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Will my right hon. Friend take every opportunity that he can to point out to the supporters of protectionism, whether in Japan, the United States or the EEC, that protectionist measures damage consumer interests everywhere by restricting competition, by raising prices and by reducing the volume of trade? Does he agree that in an interdependent and fragile world economy we cannot afford to concede protectionist measures to producer interests and producer lobbies who are agitating in their own interest?

Mr. Channon: In general, I agree with my hon. Friend. I emphasise what I said a few moments ago, that we want to open up the Japanese market to our goods, not to close our market to the Japanese. That is the aim that we are trying to pursue, with some success, but I do not disguise from the House that I should like it to be much more successful.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Is the Secretary of State aware that many of us are deeply cynical about why the Government started all this sabre rattling? We believe that it is probably designed more to impress the British electorate than the Japanese Government. If the Government are genuine in their desire to stop the grossly unfair trade impediments that have been placed in Japan on products from this country, why did they not act earlier to try to help the Scotch whisky industry and many other industries that have been unable to sell their products in Japan in previous years and that have had precious little support from the Government?

Mr. Channon: That is absolute nonsense, and I suspect that the hon. Gentleman knows it to be nonsense. No objective person would say that I have been sabre rattling this afternoon. That was a ridiculous remark. As to Scotch whisky, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the Community is taking action. The GATT panel is meeting this week, and we shall receive a report later in the summer. If there is no satisfaction from the Japanese Government, we shall retaliate.

Mr. John Townend: When considering taking action to force open the Japanese market to British goods and services, would it not be wiser to try to hit the Japanese where it really hurts, in respect of manufactured goods, rather than take action against Japanese financial houses, which will have an adverse affect on the City? If my right hon. Friend is going to quote the GATT regulations, can he explain why it seems all right for the American Congress to take action against Japanese manufactured imports?

Mr. Channon: I am sure my hon. Friend is aware that when I was talking about financial services I was talking about trying to obtain reciprocity for our financial services in Japan, not of trying to use financial services powers for other matters. As for general trading matters, the Community as a whole must deal with them, and I think that that is well understood in the House. A great many activities are going on in the Community at present. There is the anti-dumping matter to which I referred. There is the prospect of a trade diversion because of the American actions. That matter is being actively pursued and action on it may take place shortly. There is also the action that we are taking in the Community to try to unbind the tariffs on a certain range of products as a result of Spanish and Portuguese accession to the Community.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the Secretary of State agree that the Japanese ambassador and the Japanese Prime Minister have been well aware of the Government's view for many years, yet the gap gets wider and wider? Will the right hon. Gentleman say something to them about the way in which Scotch whisky is taxed out of the Japanese market, and about the fact that each of the 2,000 cars that Jaguar sells to Japan is inspected individually? Is it not time to stop talking, to take action and to say to the Japanese that we will apply exactly the same measures to their goods coming here as they apply to our goods going into Japan? That will mean something, rather than having this meaningless talk that goes on time after time from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has chosen one or two rather poor examples. Jaguar is doing extremely well in the Japanese market. The hon. Gentleman has raised the question of cars, so he may be interested to know that Austin Rover is now the fastest growing exporter of cars to Japan and is beginning to do much better in that market. There is a long way to go. As to the question of

Scotch whisky, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the Community has taken this matter to the GATT. The panel met yesterday and we will receive a report in a couple of months' time. We will either get satisfaction from the Japanese, or the Community will retaliate.

Mr. Pollock: Apart from the GATT panel's deliberations on Scotch whisky, may I suggest to my right hon. Friend that it would also be encouraging to the Scotch whisky industry if, parallel with those deliberations, there was some direct representation by Her Majesty's Government to the Japanese Government about the need to end as quickly as possible their discriminatory tax regime against imports of that product?

Mr. Channon: I shall be raising that matter tomorrow with the MITI Minister.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Secretary of State agree that, given the remarkable success of the Japanese industry in miniaturising every electronic product, it is not credible for the Japanese Government to claim that they cannot admit any more British members to the Tokyo stock exchange because they cannot find space for them on the floor? Therefore, was the Secretary of State not surprised to read, after his colleague met the Japanese Minister for Finance, that one of the officials present told the press that he was gratified to hear that reports to withdraw the licence of Japanese banks had been exaggerated and that he assumed that such a horrible thing would not happen? When will the Government steel themselves to give the same protection to British business and British industry as the Japanese Government give to Japanese industry and Japanese business, and to act to halt the mounting deficit in our trade with Japan, which has shot up fourfold under this Government?

Mr. Channon: I am very touched by the hon. Gentleman's deep concern for the British financial services industry and its desire to be part of the Tokyo stock exchange. I agree with him, and that is why it is so encouraging that, as a result of my hon. and learned Friend's visit, the timetable for entry into the Tokyo stock exchange has already been improved. When my hon. and learned Friend was there he set down a clear timetable and make it perfectly clear that, if it is not met, we shall retaliate. No doubt the House will keep us up to the mark.

As to the general trading front, I have already described the action that we are taking within the Community. There is a great deal of frustration, not only in this country, but in the rest of the European Community. We shall pursue this matter. It will not go as fast as all hon. Members would like, and there is no point pretending that it will, but some progress is being made.

Invisible Exports

2. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the level of the United Kingdom's trade in invisible exports.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): The net earnings of the United Kingdom from all forms of invisible transactions amounted to £7·2 billion last year. It is likely that earnings continued at broadly the same rate, £600 million a month, in the first quarter of 1987, and further growth is expected during the rest of this year.

Mr. Page: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is it not true that a large proportion of that sum is due to overseas investment earnings? If so, do not those huge figures give the lie to the allegation that North sea oil revenues are being squandered?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The balance of earnings on overseas investments rose by well over £1 billion last year. The great advantage of overseas investment income is that it allows the United Kingdom to participate in world expansion trends and offers a useful hedge against foreign currency fluctuations.

Mr. Gregory: Will my hon. Friend continue to hold urgent discussions with my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General so that any barriers to trade, particularly in the important industry of tourism, are removed? Clearly, a number of companies are holding back from investing in this country because they note that the Labour party continues to attack tourism as jobs for ice cream salesmen and Mickey Mouse jobs. Will my hon. Friend confirm that there is nothing remotely true in that, and that tourism is the fastest growth industry in Britain?

Mr. Clark: I have constant consultations with my hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General. Alas, my hon. Friend's point is all too true. The Labour party continually regards invisible earnings as some kind of immoral earnings, to which any kind of reference is somehow demeaning.

Car Sales

3. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of new cars sold in the United Kingdom are imported; and how this compares with 1986.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Giles Shaw): Imports accounted for 49·4 per cent. of the United Kingdom car market in the first quarter of 1987, as against 56 per cent. for 1986 as a whole. This is a welcome change in trend and powerful evidence of the appeal of British products.

Mr. Howarth: Those figures are welcome. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that Austin Rover has had its best export figures for seven years. As the buyers in Spain, Japan and the United States are demonstrating their confidence in British products, as shown by record sales to those countries, does my hon. Friend agree that the British people could ably demonstrate their concern about unemployment by ensuring that they seek wherever possible to buy British motor cars and other British products?

Mr. Shaw: I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's remarks and his comments on the substantially improved export performance of the Rover Group. The Rover Group's share of the market in the first quarter of 1987 was 16·5 per cent. This shows welcome growth compared with the whole of 1986, when the share was substantially lower. There is plenty of room to demonstrate that, in terms of consumer choice, the Rover Group's products are beginning to meet demand.

Mr. Terry Davis: For the purpose of the figures on imports, if a car is designed in Japan, built with Japanese components and has a Japanese badge on the front but is screwed together in this country, does the Minister regard it as a British car, or as a Japanese car?

Mr. Shaw: As the hon. Gentleman knows very well, if the investment is made within this country and the vehicle is put together in a development or assisted area, there should be 60 per cent. of local sourcing for it to qualify as a European product.

Mr. Roger King: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way to stem the tide of imports is to produce the sort of cars that the British public want? Is it not, therefore, good news that the Rover Group and Honda have agreed to proceed with the new R8 range of cars, using the best expertise from both countries to build a range of cars which we hope will establish a sound substantial market share within the European market within a short time? Is this not a good sign of job security at Longbridge in particular, which will have the task of building this good range of cars?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right and, as he knows, the developments with the Honda company continue to improve. This is the fourth occasion on which there has been a joint agreement to manufacture a motor car which has been jointly developed. From that point of view, the position of the Rover Group in relation to Honda is steadily improving, to the benefit of the workers in both companies.

Industrial Performance

4. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met officers of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the performance of British industry.

Mr. Channon: I last met officers of the CBI at the meeting of the National Economic Development Council on 1 April. The performance of the economy, including industry, was among the matters discussed.

Mr. Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the results of the latest CBI survey, which were announced yesterday, which show that manufacturing output in Britain is expected to rise by well over 3 per cent. this year—an excellent figure — and that companies are now more optimistic about future orders than they have been at any time in the last 10 years? Will my right hon. Friend point out to the officers of the CBI that those results testify to the success of Government policies and are good news not only for British industry but for Britain?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I hardly need to point out to anyone — it is perfectly obvious to everyone in the country — that the success and prospects for British industry are better now than they have been for probably a generation. The survey from which my hon. Friend quoted is the most optimistic survey that the CBI has ever produced since it started to keep such records. I believe that manufacturing output will do extremely well this year, as will manufacturing exports, and the forecast for British industry is extremely good.

Mr. Loyden: Is the Secretary of State aware that the CBI has been critical of the amount of investment that has taken place in research and development, which is one of the reasons why British industry has failed in many areas?

Mr. Channon: The CBI, if it is critical about research and development, is certainly not critical about anything else. We see the survey as a great success, and we know how successful British industry is. As for research and development, certainly no one can level that criticism at my budget, which has seen a total transformation. Most of the money that used to be spent on propping up loss-making nationalised industries is now being spent on research and development.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in an expanding economy, successful employers need to be able to attract labour from unsuccessful employers? Does he agree also that if the SDP proposals for statutory pay controls were introduced, this would stultify the economy and restrain growth?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I am sure that that is absolutely right. It will be interesting to have the proposals explained to us in greater detail. I suspect that they will prove equally unconvincing.

Mr. John Smith: If the Secretary of State pays attention to results rather than to projected surveys, will he confirm that since 1979 manufacturing output is down by 4 per cent., that investment in manufacturing industry is down by 17 per cent., and that British industrial capacity has been reduced by 20 per cent.? Is that an advertisement for the success of Government policies over two terms?

Mr. Channon: Britain's manufacturing output has grown for six successive years. The volume of manufacturing output is 14 per cent. higher than it was in the depths of the recession. The growth of manufacturing output showed a sharp spurt in the second half of last year. Outside forecasters agree with the Government in predicting strong growth in manufacturing output in Britain throughout 1987. We expect it to expand 4 per cent. faster than the rest of the economy, and faster than in any year since 1973.

Regional Strategy

6. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the officers of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce to discuss the impact of the Government's regional strategy.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has no current plans for a meeting with the association specifically to discuss the impact of the Government's regional strategy.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Surely the Minister, with his background, is aware that chambers of commerce in Yorkshire and Humberside are concerned about the wider implications of regional policy, including, for instance, assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1985. Is the Minister aware that the 1984 report showed that one quarter of all assistance went to the south-east? In the micro-electronics industry, for instance, only one project in Yorkshire and Humberside was supported, compared with 28 in the south-east. Surely the Minister has a responsibility to try to redress such an imbalance.

Mr. Shaw: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the redrawing of the assisted area map has benefited the northern regions particularly. He will know that most assisted areas are now within that part of the country which he and I represent. He will also know that the performance of local industries and companies in Yorkshire and Humberside has shown a dramatic improvement. The regional report supplied by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce states:

"Yorkshire and Humberside: After a year of relatively poor results the figures for the final quarter of 1986 are comprehensively the best results seen for some time. The balance figures for domestic orders in manufacturing have more than trebled, and those for domestic deliveries are better still. Export performance too is significantly improved and employment levels and expectations are similarly encouraging."

That is the true position of industry in the region.

Sir Alex Fletcher: In considering the impact of regional policy, has my hon. Friend noticed that manufacturing productivity in Scotland is well above the United Kingdom average, that manufacturing exports per employee in Scotland are running at 30 per cent. above the United Kingdom level, and that the latest GDP and personal disposable income figures put Scotland in the top three of the 11 United Kingdom planning regions? Do not these excellent results shame those who constantly talk Scotland down?

Mr. Shaw: I am delighted to hear such a robust defence from my hon. Friend of the performance of industry in Scotland. It is a powerful fact that improved competitiveness and productivity are countrywide. That is the surest way to improve sales, profits and employment.

Mr. Pike: Are the chambers of commerce in the north-west region more concerned than the Government about the decline of manufacturing industries, which has meant a loss of 30 per cent. of the jobs in that sector in a region that is heavily dependent on manufacturing jobs? How much longer can we continue to trade with such a massive deficit budget on manufacturing industry?

Mr. Shaw: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the pattern in the north-west and I concede that regions have different patterns of performance. However, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce report for the Greater Manchester area states:

"After a less worrying third quarter than in certain other regions the improvement in the fourth quarter is very pronounced, strongly positive for home and export orders".

I suggest that there is now an improving trend even in the north-west.

Mr. Hind: Is my hon. Friend aware of the quiet way in which the new post-1984 regional development grant and regional selective assistance programme is working? In the north-west and in my constituency of Lancashire, West, there have been 52 applications for such grant in the past year resulting in £3·2 million investment, which has encouraged industry to invest and has created 600 jobs in my constituency. Surely that is the way that regional development should continue, and I wish my hon. Friend every success and long may it continue.

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. He will be equally aware that, with the tailored system of regional support, the support is really reaching those particular areas and industries that need it.

Manufacturing Industry

7. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the level of import penetration in the manufacturing sector.

Mr. Alan Clark: For the year 1986, imports of manufactured products are estimated to have accounted for 34½ per cent. of United Kingdom home demand.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Secretary of State agree that an import penetration level for the manufacturing sector of nearly one third suggests that we are not as competitive as the Government claim in manufacturing, a view surely confirmed by the record deficit on manufacturing forecast in the Budget?

Mr. Clark: In fact, the hon. Gentleman is somewhat mistaken. Over half that total is accounted for by the import of material, either semi-finished, intermediate or capital, necessary for British manufacturing industry, for jobs and production at home. With regard to the pessimistic forecast to which the hon. Gentleman drew attention, in the final quarter of last year exports were up 6·5 per cent. and imports were up only 3·5 per cent. For the period December 1986 to February 1987, exports were up 2 per cent. and imports were actually down 3 per cent.

Mr. Fallon: Is there not rather a lot of British hypocrisy in the talk about retaliation against imports when the European industrial tariff is actually higher than the Japanese industrial tariff and when so much of the European public sector is closed to Japanese or American penetration? Is it not rather odd to be demanding access for Cable and Wireless to the Japanese market, when the Japanese are not allowed into our market?

Mr. Clark: I do not know how appropriate it would be for me to be tempted to return to the subject of Japanese-United Kingdom trade on a question that does not actually relate to that topic. However, it has always been my view that the obstruction to our exports to Japan and the need to open up that market—to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State drew attention earlier—arises not so much from tariffs, but from the various obstructive devices that the Japanese interpose between our manufacturers and fair and proper access to their domestic market.

Mr. Winnick: Do the Government recognise the tremendous continuing damage in many parts of the country, certainly in the west midlands, resulting from the high level of import penetration? Has the Minister abandoned the views that he used to advocate as a Back Bencher when he sought adequate protection for the British manufacturing industry? Has he finished with those views?

Mr. Clark: I am quite ready to let hon. Members assess what they think my views are from what I say. The level of import penetration which the hon. Member deplores, is, as I have said frequently, not within the control of the Government; it is the consequence of a variety of individual and corporate choices that are made seeking value and quality for money.

Mr. Richard Page: Does my hon. Friend agree that the high import figure shows that plenty of opportunities exist for British manufacturers if they care to take them? Will he support this by holding more "Better made in Britain" exhibitions?

Mr. Clark: Yes, what my hon. Friend says is perfectly right. We support "Better made in Britain" exhibitions. We are giving a research grant to the "Think British" campaign, and public purchasing is over 95 per cent. British sourced.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Minister understand that the full implication of one of his previous answers is that the

Government seem to have no responsibility for our balance of trade in manufactured goods? Is he aware that it was only under this Government that in 1983, for the first time, we had a balance of trade deficit in manufactured goods? Given that the deficit was nearly £6 billion last year and will be £8 billion this year, have the Government the remotest idea how this dreadful imbalance can be corrected?

Mr. Clark: Considering that the right hon. and learned Gentleman had the answer less than two minutes ago, presumably he is choosing deliberately to misrepresent what I said. The Government have no responsibility for the large and widely diffused mass of individual and corporate choices which account for the present level of import penetration. I said no more than that. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman cares to tell us what the Labour party would do to direct choice, we shall be interested to hear it.

Steel Industry

8. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, when he next meets the chairman of the British Steel Corporation, he will raise the future of the five integrated plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The strategy agreed in 1985, which was based on the continued operation of all five integrated works for at least three years, remains firmly in place. Decisions on a strategy thereafter must wait until a clearer picture has emerged of market developments, particulary within the EEC.

Mr. Strang: Will the Minister recognise that the Ravenscraig plan is fundamental to Scotland's long-term industrial future? Is he aware of the damage that recent speculation has done to confidence in the plant's long term future? Will he accept that the commitment to maintain steelmaking until August 1988 is no longer adequate? May we have a long-term commitment from the Government?

Mr. Shaw: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. He will be aware that I, in company with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), who has responsibility for industry in Scotland, visited the Ravenscraig plant not long ago and had discussions with management and trade union representatives. I made it clear to them at that time that the five integrated sites policy will remain in place and cannot be altered until we have assessed the position nearer the date. The Ravenscraig plant today is working above the planned output in all areas, with some additional weekend work in the strip mill. This is a very good performance and a powerful indication that the proposals are working well at the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Hickmet: As my hon. Friend knows, the British Steel Corporation is on target to make a profit approaching £200 million this year. Will he confirm that the future of the five integrated plants depends upon commercial success? If jobs in the industry, and the industry itself, are to be preserved, it is essential that the corporation remains commercially successful. Does he agree that any judgment on the future of those plants—my hon. Friend will know that the plant in my constituency is the most successful within the British Steel Corporation—must depend upon commercial success, profitability, viability, quality and reliability?

Mr. Shaw: I have to endorse wholly what my hon. Friend said. The crucial factor that remains to be resolved, having agreed that the corporation is now performing with extreme success in virtually every activity, is that the market for steel products should be receptive and buoyant.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate the need to build long-term stability and confidence in the industry and that that can best be done with assurance from the Government about the future ownership and control? Does he further appreciate that the present policies seem to be based on the premise that if steel is produced efficiently, at some future date the industry will be flogged off to the highest bidder?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman may have his own views about that, but the fact undoubtedly remains that the corporation should be in the private sector. That is where, ultimately, the Government intend to place it. The reason for that is simple — it will then be able to demonstrate beyond doubt, without any taxpayers' money being put at risk, that it can survive from profits, competition and productivity.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that when the Conservative Government returned to power in 1979 British Steel was in a very sad way? It was overmanned, uncompetitive and could not win contracts against the rest of Europe, or indeed, the world. Today it is a very different story, is it not? We are now competitive. We can compete with anybody. Had it not been for the Government's help and advice, there may not have been a British Steel Corporation today.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. It was the decisive way in which the Government tackled the problems associated with the manufacturing and marketing of steel products that enabled the corporation to restructure and to survive during the biggest steel crisis in Europe, which gave rise to the original strategy decisions in 1982 and to the decision in 1985, which is still in place.

Mr. Williams: The Minister has just confirmed his party's commitment to the privatisation of this sector of the steel industry, but will he also confirm that the previous chairman of BSC said that, regardless of productivity and profitability improvement, the privatisation of this sector could be achieved only if one of the five plants was closed?

Mr. Shaw: The right hon. Gentleman will also know that over a considerable period there have been discussions with various BSC chairmen on the restructuring of the corporation. He will know that there were several discussions of that kind in 1982 and in 1985. The corporation is at the moment looking at plans for privatisation and the Government are taking advice from merchant banks. When all the advice is available, we shall take a view on how privatisation can best be achieved.

Mr. Wilson: Since the top management of British Steel is notoriously anti-Ravenscraig and anti-Scottish, what guarantee will the Minister give that, in the event of privatisation, the first act of the newly privatised corporation will not be to close Ravenscraig steelworks and thus take away Scotland's indigenous steel industry?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman must take it from me that the five integrated site policy was agreed with the corporation in 1982 and 1985. There has been a consistent campaign by some Scottish representatives who seek to suggest that the corporation is not supportive of the five integrated site strategy. It is supportive of it, and it is that strategy that has brought the corporation to a highly enviable position within the EEC.

Industrial Performance

9. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures for the annual turnover of British industry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): The output index for manufacturing industry, excluding the energy and the service sector, was 104·6 in 1986, based on 1980 equal to 100. Since the trough of the recession in 1981, manufacturing output has grown impressively and is now over 15 per cent. higher. The turnover of manufacturing industry in 1985 was £225 billion in current prices.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that those good figures, together with the CBI report that we have just received, is a tribute not only to the framework and background that the Government have provided for the industrial sector, but to management and work force within our industry, which have combined to bring Britain to the position where it can now compete right across the industrial sector with the best that the world can offer? Does that not give us enormous hope for the future in terms of the profitability of British industry and secure jobs for our work people?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am sure that he will celebrate with me the fact Britain is now enjoying a top position in productivity and competitiveness—the best position that we have been in for two decades. As he is a west midlands Member, I am sure that he will also celebrate with me the fact that the manufacturing sector is now spearheading our industrial recovery and that the projected 4 per cent. growth in manufacturing will be the fastest rate of growth since 1973.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Instead of celebrating, will the Minister look at the CBI survey, in which he will find that only 15 per cent. of the companies in that survey regarded their fixed plant as adequate to the demands on them, and that 25 per cent. of companies were unable to meet demand because of a lack of fixed capacity? Is that not an inevitable consequence of the destruction that occurred in manufacturing industry during the early years of the Government's period of office, and does it not reflect on the lack of investment in fixed plant in recent years?

Mr. Butcher: Alliance spokesmen should get involved in a different form of research. Industrialists tell me, day in and day out, that the worst possible outcome in business and industrial terms with regard to confidence, exchange rates and interest rates would be a hung Parliament. To that extent one can say that alliance spokesmen are arguing for uncertainty and the undermining of our economy.

Mr. Latham: Following the Budget and three cuts in interest rates since early March, are not all the jigsaw pieces now in place for the sustained growth of British industry? Should not any lingering political uncertainties have been satisfactorily dispelled by the middle of June?

Mr. Butcher: If we can keep current trends going into the 1990s, talk of a British industrial renaissance would not be an exaggeration. We have a magnificent opportunity and I am sure that the electorate will not throw it away.

Insider Dealing

10. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken on information so far received from the inspectors he has appointed to inquire into insider dealing at the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Howard: I have received no information from the inspectors which calls for action on my part. Any question of prosecution in this case would be a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is being kept informed of the progress of the inspection.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Government are not convincing the public that everything is now in order — quite the contrary. Surely we need the high-profile techniques of the United States regulatory authorities, which send shivers down the spines of those who are brought in for questioning, and not polite phone calls from DTI inspectors? Criminologists have shown that arrest has the greatest impact on white-collar criminals, not the softly-softly approach of the Government and the DTI.

Mr. Howard: The powers of the Securities and Exchange Commission to investigate insider dealing are less than those that are available to our investigators, and it is noteworthy that during the passage of the Financial Services Act no Opposition Member suggested a single additional power to investigate insider dealing over and above those that are contained in the Act, which are being used.

Mr. Nelson: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that not only were the Government responsible for making insider deaing a criminal offence and enhancing the powers of investigation under successive legislation, but that, considering the volume of highly commercial confidential information that passes over the desks of officials in the Department of Trade and Industry, we are remarkably fortunate in this country in enjoying a high degree of integrity among officials, which has become evident over recent years?

Mr. Howard: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's observations, which I greatly welcome.

Mr. Robin Cook: Did the Minister note last month's statement by Tesco that it is bringing forward its bid for Hillards because insider dealing had shoved up the price of the shares of Hillards by one quarter in the preceding month? How do the Government hope to stop these scandals in the City if they cannot bring to book the insider dealers in their own Department?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman should await the outcome of the inspection to which I earlier referred before he leaps to such unwarranted conclusions. If there is any information arising out of the other matter to which he

referred that warrants consideration in the Department it will receive that consideration and any appropriate actions will be taken.

Company Takeovers (Concert Parties)

11. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions have been undertaken since 1979 under part VI of the Companies Act for the organisation of a concert party.

Mr. Howard: None, Sir.

Mr. Park: In view of the conclusion of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry that there was almost certainly a concert party in operation at Westland, will the Minister reconsider the decision not to hold an inquiry? Is an inquiry not made even more necessary by the strange fact that while one member of the concert party — Dreyfus of Switzerland — admits that its agents were agents for Lazards, which was the financial adviser to Westland, Lazards do not admit this commercial connection?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced last year that he had decided not to appoint inspectors into this matter, and no new information has emerged to warrant changing that decision. The hon. Gentleman has completely misunderstood the nature of the information to which he has referred. All that that information amounts to is the fact that occasionally the Swiss bank concerned transacts business in London through Hill Samuel, the Midland bank or Lazard Brothers. This information was published in the *Bankers Almanac and Year Book* over a number of years, and it is of no relevance to the matters to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Sir Alex Fletcher: When does my hon. and learned Friend expect to receive the report of the inspectors who are examining the Guinness affair?

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: After the election.

Mr. Howard: The inspectors examining Guinness plc are carrying out their investigations with considerable expedition and are making good progress. However, I cannot give a specific date as to when their report will be available.

Mr. Robin Cook: Did the Government know about the relationship between Lazards and Dreyfus, and if so, why did the Secretary of State or his Ministers not inform the Select Committee on any of the three occasions when they gave evidence?

Mr. Howard: For the reason I gave a moment ago, if the hon. Gentleman had but listened, the information to which he has referred is of absolutely no relevance to this matte

Overdrafts (Credit Charge Advertisements)

12. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will consult the chairmen of the clearing banks and the Bank of England concerning the advertising of credit charges on overdrafts.

Mr. Howard: The exemption of bank overdrafts from the full documentation requirement of the Consumer Credit Act serves the interests of both banks and their customers. However, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade told the hon. and learned Gentleman on 10 April that it might be appropriate for banks to provide more information to consumers about credit charges on overdrafts, and my officials are consulting banks and the Office of Fair Trading on this matter.

Mr. Janner: I welcome some movement in the direction of sanity. However, do the Government not recognise that the combination of the banks' right to charge whatever interest they please on what they choose to call unauthorised overdrafts, and the banks having no duty whatever to tell people what interest will be charged on such overdrafts, is a scandalous rip-off? It is not enough simply to say that the officials are having consultations with the banks. What steps, if any, do the Government propose to take to stop this practice?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade explained in full in the debate on 10 April the reason why further action of the kind that the hon. and learned Gentleman thinks appropriate would not be in the interest of either the banks or their customers. We are seeing what can be done to make more information available.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: While I should not like to encourage the Government to interfere in any private arrangements over overdrafts, should not my hon. and learned Friend at least encourage all the credit card companies to publish the overdraft charges and the APR available so that at least my constituents and those of any other Member can shop around? There is no question of being ripped-off, but at least customers should be allowed to shop around.

Mr. Howard: That information is available to consumers.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister confirm that the burden of debt facing millions of households is not only up on an astonishingly high level but is increasing at an extraordinary pace? Are the Government to continue their lack of concern about this serious matter?

Mr. Howard: I cannot see how this arises out of a question on charges on overdrafts. However, the debts to which the hon. Gentleman referred are backed by increasing assets.

Mr. Nelson: May I put it to my hon. and learned Friend that there is a legitimate subject of concern in the questions raised today? Some of the average rates of interest charged both on overdrafts and on credit card deficit balances amount to usury, if not exploitation, given that there has been a further fall in base rate today to 9·5 per cent. and we may be looking forward to a further fall. This is not a matter for the Government to get involved in private arrangements, but I do think that they could send some signals to the private sector.

Mr. Howard: The only real point of concern is whether information is given to consumers to enable them to make properly informed decisions. The Consumer Credit Act 1974 ensures that that information is available. Overdrafts that have not been previously agreed are a special case and, for the reasons that were explained in the Adjournment debate to which I referred earlier, I am asking the banks to consider what further information can be made available to their customers.

Research and Development

13. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current extent of research and development funding by his Department.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): In the current financial year my Department expects to spend £412 million on support for research and development, which is a threefold increase on the expenditure level of the Labour Government.

Mr. McKay: Irrespective of those figures, is the Minister aware that, since 1981, the number of people who work in research and development has fallen by more than 20 per cent.? Within the figure for research and development there has been an increase in military research and development and that suggests a serious decline in industrial research and development. If the Minister is aware of that, should he not take steps to obviate that balance by putting more money into industrial research and development? That would make sure that, when the oil production declines, we are in a position to become a competitive nation.

Mr. Pattie: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that fewer people were employed in research and development in 1985 than in 1983. Between those two years it is also true to say that there was an increase in research and development in the civil sector of 16 per cent. I believe that the other part of the hon. Gentleman's question is more interesting, as it suggests that the Government, through their expenditure levels, can positively encourage industry to do the thing that only industry can decide to do—to commit the requisite levels of research and development funding to improve industry's commercial prospects.

Mr. Forman: While congratulating the Government and my right hon. Friend's Department on tripling the research and development expenditure since the time of the Labour Government, may I ask my right hon. Friend to recognise that the important point is to get the private sector to increase its contribution to research and development on a year-on-year basis? Furthermore, is there not a role for my right hon. Friend's Department to support applications for the introduction of new technologies to existing industrial and manufacturing processes?

Mr. Pattie: Yes, indeed, and that is why we have an extensive, advanced manufacturing technology programme and why we introduced the LINK programme in December of last year. That is a £420 million programme which, over five years, is to be targeted at precisely the area raised by my hon. Friend. The Government and industry, in partnership on a 50-50 basis, will improve what I might call the exploitation factor—taking a research and development idea and pushing it forward into a marketable product.

Dr. Bray: Now that the Minister is the sole obstacle to agreement on the European framework programme, and in view of the projected cuts in DTI research and development expenditure over the next few years, the lack of any growth of research and development in industry since 1981, and a 10 per cent. fall in research and development in the electronics industry between 1983 and 1985, is the Minister aware that, under the Government's leadership, Britain has become the sluggard of Europe with regard to research and development?

Mr. Pattie: If we are the sluggard of Europe, I do not know what Europe would have made of us in 1979, when the Labour Government went out of office. At that time there was an expenditure level precisely three times below our current expenditure level.

If I am single-handedly holding up the European research and development, I am doing so because of my belief in the correct quality of programmes. I do not see why we should be relentlessly driven down a particular path simply to appease and accommodate the types of programmes for which we believe there is no competitive future for the rest of Europe.

Airbus

14. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is yet able to announce his decision on the launch-aid applications by British Aerospace plc in respect of the A330 and A340 Airbuses.

16. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Government support for Airbus.

Mr. Pattie: Discussions with British Aerospace about its combined application for launch aid in respect of the Airbus A330 and A340 projects are continuing. We aim to reach a decision as soon as possible and an announcement to the House will be made thereafter.

Mr. Stern: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Can he say how long he expects discussions to continue before an announcement is made? Can he also confirm the Government's support in principle for extensions to the Airbus range and assistance with funding?

Mr. Pattie: First, I wish to recognise the considerable role that my hon. Friend has played on behalf of his constituents, who have British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce interests. The House will appreciate that the first decision that had to be taken was whether the Government believed that this project was worthy of support. That decision has been taken and we are now discussing with British Aerospace the precise level and amount of that support in a constructive and harmonious atmosphere. I am confident that we shall be able to reach agreement in the quite near future.

Mr. Michie: I am glad that the Government have finally realised the importance of such a project. Does the Minister realise that delay means a loss of orders? The longer the delay, the more orders may be lost. Has he any idea what orders have been lost up to the present?

Mr. Pattie: There is no question of orders being lost at present, because the aircraft concerned in the question have not yet been formally launched. That decision has not been finally taken by the Airbus consortium. What is in issue here is the level of support that will be necessary to maintain the involvement of British Aerospace in a consortium which the Government believe is very important to the health and wellbeing of the aerospace industry, not only in the United Kingdom, but in Europe.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order. Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order of which I have given you notice. When matters concerning Members and business interests have been raised with you in the past, you have suggested that representations should be made to the Committee of Selection. I ask you to consider whether such advice is any longer sound as only two members of the Committee of Selection do not hold outside business interests. Indeed, the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) holds seven directorships, five consultancies, including a consultancy with Alcrafield Ltd.——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Madden: —including a consultancy with Alcrafield Ltd.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. All Members' interests are registered. I do not think it is necessary for the hon. Gentleman to read them out.

Mr. Madden: May I ask two specific questions? To whom can Members make representations urging that members of the Committee of Selection should be required not to hold outside business interests? Secondly, do you not agree, Mr. Speaker, that until such a requirement is introduced, suspicion that commercial interests exert influence in the House, including the selection of Members to Standing Committees, will remain? Will you also understand that concern will continue—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a very busy day ahead of us.

Mr. Madden: I did give notice to the hon. Member for Shipley, and I am——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The point of order is to me. I want the hon. Gentleman to come to the point.

Mr. Madden: I wanted to make clear that I had given notice to the hon. Member concerned.

I have asked you two specific questions, Mr. Speaker. I wish to remind you and the House that this will remain of concern to hon. Members and to the public until we take effective action to ensure that private business interests do not exert influence in the House or on the selection of Members to Standing Committees. I ask you to reflect again——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman gave me notice of his question. I am ready with an answer straightaway. He is surely not suggesting that Mr. Speaker should be responsible for nominating Members to Select Committees. If the hon. Gentleman has any complaint to make, the Select Committee on Members' Interests exists to deal with complaints of that kind. The hon. Gentleman should direct his complaints to that Committee, not to me.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If this sort of matter is worthy of further consideration, which I gather you doubt—and I share your doubt—will you assure the House that consideration will also be given, for example, to trade union sponsorship of Labour Members of Parliament and the influence that that has on their voting behaviour?

Mr. Speaker: Many hon. Members have a background of some kind or other in business or industry. Those interests are required to be registered. If hon. Members have complaints about individual Members, they should take them up with the Select Committee concerned.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think it will help.

Mr. Dickens: On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that in recent times extradition orders have failed to be enacted because of bad drafting. I could not give you notice of my question, Mr. Speaker, but it has become common knowledge that the train robber, Ronald Biggs, who has 28 years still to serve of a sentence given in a British court——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Amongst my many responsibilities I have no responsibility for train robbers. I do not think that I can help.

Mr. Dickens: May I finish?

Mr. Speaker: I think not. I have heard the hon. Gentleman's point of order, and I cannot help him further.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. Gentleman's point of order, provided that it does not go back to what he said the other day.

Mr. Lewis: Further to the point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I heard the hon. Gentleman's point of order on the same subject the other day. I have nothing further to add to what I said then or now.

Mr. Lewis *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I want to raise the question of Privy Councillor terms and how they relate to our proceedings. As I understand it, Privy Councillors are not necessarily members of Government—indeed, they include Opposition Members. Yesterday, at a press conference, Mr. Bernard Ingham was able to give a briefing to journalists in Downing street, drawing on information that was given to the Prime Minister on Privy Councillor terms when she was Leader of the Opposition. The right hon. Lady was able to acquire that information because she had been selected as a member of the Opposition, not as a member of Government, for appointment as a Privy Councillor. Would you, Mr. Speaker, deprecate a practice whereby——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard enough. I do not have any responsibility for press officers in Downing street, either.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: Order. With the permission of the House I shall put together the two motions relating to the statutory instruments.

Ordered.

That the draft Grants by Local Housing Authorities (Appropriate Percentage and Exchequer Contributions) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Black Country Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. — *[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman has lost his chance.

Directly Elected Neighbourhood Councils

3.39 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I beg to move,

That leave to given to bring in a Bill to give residents of British cities the right to establish directly elected neighbourhood councils and to make consequential provision for their constitution and resources.

The Bill will facilitate the process of parish review which was envisaged in the Local Government Act 1972. It will remove from city councils the sole responsibility of initiating the parish or neighbourhood review procedure. It will give residents the right to petition their district council to initiate the review and it will provide for a fixed timetable with which district councils must comply in initiating parish reviews under their present powers.

The legislation is designed to boost the urban parish movement. After the reorganisation of local government in 1974, urban areas in England were left without the degree of representation or participation that was adequate to secure effective and convenient local government. The Local Government Act 1972 established larger local authorities and remoter local government. Fortunately, the Act also provided the means to remedy the position—the parish review. But, sadly, the public, and even Members of Parliament, may not be familiar with this term or with the enabling part of the legislation.

The Local Government Act states that assessments of the establishment of new parishes are determined by the aptitude of such parishes to secure "effective and convenient" local government. Such assessments must be made initially by the district council, recommended by the Boundary Commission and sanctioned by the Secretary of State. However, it is clear from the legislation and Department of the Environment circulars that there is a firm intention that these reviews should be taken seriously.

The Department of the Environment circular of April 1983 reiterated to district councils that they had not been released from their obligations under the Act to conduct parish reviews. Despite all the benefits that accrue from the establishment of parish councils in urban areas, few have been established. In the north-west I can think of only two which have been established in this way—Prescot town council in the borough of Knowsley and Shaw and Crompton town council in Oldham district council. Indeed, the Shaw town council was largely established as a result of the vigorous efforts of Saddleworth's Chris Davies who is also campaigning to establish one in Littleborough, and he should be congratulated on that. Hon. Members may know of others which have been established more recently, and some go under the name of "town council". Yet, there is disappointment and bafflement that the urban parish council movement has not developed adequately.

Unfortunately, much depends on the district council. At present there are several reasons why many district councils have failed to undertake these reviews. District councils are invariably reluctant to divest powers, and many do not agree with the view of our joint alliance commission on constitutional reform, which states:

"no decision should be taken at a higher level of government which can with equal or greater effectiveness be taken at a lower level."

Given that the legislation imposes on district councils a duty to review the position of parish councils from time

[Mr. David Alton]

to time, it is not surprising that those district councils which are hostile to decentralisation and devolution should have chosen to delay their reviews again and again. New legislation, such as this Bill, should lay down a specific time, and my Bill suggests every five years.

A further complication is that under present arrangements any district council recommending that a parish should be established will have to show that it, the district council, does not already provide effective and convenient local government. As Joan Perrin of the Association for Neighbourhood Councils points out, this is an "unlikely prescription for change. "The phrase, "effective and convenient" is open to some criticism as there is no uniform understanding of its meaning." Guidelines should be laid down.

The sole responsibility should also be removed from district councils. Local residents—and I suggest this in my Bill—should have the right to initiate the review by petitioning the district council. The Urban Parishes Bill 1978, a private Member's Bill introduced by the late Graham Page—and I am glad that his successor, the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), is one of the sponsors of my Bill today—proposed that 100 local government electors would suffice. I think that that number is about right.

These moves would give added impetus to the growth of urban parish councils. In a city like Liverpool—the Bill is specifically aimed at cities—good people have drifted away from the complex and often soul-destroying job of being a city councillor. Neighbourhood councils would be a nursery for rearing a new generation of local councillors. They would also ease the burden on city councillors. The case loads of most of our inner city councillors—I served as one for eight years—are so vast that the councillors spend most of their time solving problems and little time acting as true representatives of their community.

The neighbourhood council would not require a vast bureaucracy or infinite sums of money. As the Merseyside Association of Local Councils and groups like the Southern Neighbourhood Council in Liverpool have proved, small is not only beautiful; it is often better as well.

A century ago, Liverpool had a network of mini town halls. The old Wavertree town hall in my constituency still stands, although these days it is used as a restaurant. Without highly localised decision making, the sense of community and civic pride which once existed throughout that network of town halls has sadly become another dim and distant memory.

My right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Grimond, once said that

"if politics is about power and Liberalism is about people, then we are for power to people."

Therefore, it is not surprising that Liberals are wholeheartedly supporting the Bill, but I am glad to say that hon. Members from all other parties are backing it, too. They, like me, believe that neighbourhood councils should be able to spend the equivalent of a 2p rate, commensurate with the population of their area.

We also believe that by being able to develop the local community facilities, by ensuring proper use of existing amenities and by championing local causes which are important to people, such neighbourhood councils will help to recreate the bonding of the community and establish a new sense of neighbourliness. Surely the principles of the village are good for the city as well. More than anything else, it is the anonymity, the powerlessness, the lack of a clear identity and of cohesion which have threatened the vitality of city life. No one else will reverse those trends but city dwellers themselves, and they need the structure and the power to enable them to do it.

The parish is the truly local level of government in England, the only one with a statutory status. It was created by the Liberal Government in the Local Government Act 1984. As such, it is perfectly placed to be the bedrock of devolutionist plans. The recognition of the need for a national system of parish councils, neighbourhood councils, town councils, community councils—call them what one will—as the building blocks of government is our starting point for the reform of local democracy.

Mr. Speaker: Does any hon. Member seek to oppose?

3.47 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): If the problems referred to by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) could be resolved by councils and committees and reports—which is the line that he takes—we would have no problems in Liverpool. The hon. Member talks about city areas. Between 1968 and 1973 Liverpool had the education priority areas study, in 1969-70 the sheltered neighbourhood action, between 1969 and 1973 the Brunswick neighbourhood scheme, between 1969 and 1975 the Vauxhall community development project, between 1972 and 1976 Her Majesty's Government carried out various studies, including the inner area study, and we had the Department of the Environment priority estates project survey in 1984. All those studies have shown what people knew already—or at least any honest person—that the fundamental problem was and is the need for an urgent injection of finance into deprived areas, not the setting up of bogus committees to deal with the problem. The Liberal party's solution is to set up councils and committees, which will be starved of finance, and by that particular device spread the responsibility away from their particular door to the deprived areas that have been mentioned already.

The Red Russian leader, Vladimir Ilitch Lenin, said that an ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory. The theory expounded by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill may seem attractive. However, in my view it is blatant electioneering by the Liberal party. Set against the background of social deprivation in places such as Liverpool, it is an abrogation of the responsibility of any administration, and a failure by councillors to face up to their legislative duties as elected community representatives. That is the theory.

The experience has been referred to by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. The Southern neighbourhood council, a typical example of what he is talking about, has been in existence for 10 years in Liverpool. But it has only glossed over the needs of the people of Liverpool at a time of deprivation.

That deprivation has been referred to in reports Europe-wide. The constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) has been described as having the worst environmental and housing conditions in Western Europe, yet it is watched over by one of the neighbourhood councils that the hon. Member

for Mossley Hill wants to implement. Blocks of flats in Caryl Gardens and King Gardens were listed on a demolition programme in 1979 in the area of the Southern neighbourhood council. In 1981-82, the Liberal administration cancelled those plans. It took a Labour administration in 1983, through the injection of finance and the urban regeneration programme, to deal with the environmental problem. Sad to relate, one of the first tasks undertaken by that council when it came to power through the decision of the Law Lords, when the 47 Liverpool councillors were removed, was to halt the project that would have dealt with the problems that the Southern neighbourhood council should have been dealing with.

The matter has been referred to in the House before. On 27 April 1983, the then Minister for Housing and Construction — the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley), now Minister of State for the Armed Forces—said:

"I must point out to the hon. Gentleman and the Liberal Party in Liverpool that Liverpool city council has been a conspicuous underspender. The crucial need in Liverpool is for full utilisation of the resources that have been made available."

Not setting up bogus councils, as the hon. Member for Mossley Hill proposes.

"The Liverpool city council underspent in 1981-82 and it appears that it has produced an increased underspend in 1982-83. The local authority should make better use of its stock and full use of its resources."—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1983; Vol. 41, c. 848.]

When the hon. Member for Mossley Hill was Liverpool's housing chairman in 1978-79, the housing investment programme was underspent by £6 million. That would be a hell of a lot of money today. In 1980-81, the Liberals in Liverpool had a housing allocation of £47·2 million; they spent £40·2 million—an underspend of £7 million. In 1981-82, they had an allocation of £40·8 million and spent £35·4 million—an underspend of £5·4 million. The total resources made available in 1982-83 amounted to £106·3 million; the council spent only £74 million—and underspend of £32 million.

We talk about power to the people, but it is power to the people without the resources to deal with the problems with which the council is supposed to deal. There are 33 wards in the Liverpool area; ideally, we should like more. We in the Labour party campaign to involve people in the communities in what is going on in Liverpool. But we must understand that councillors are democratically elected to the local council. They are accountable for the allocation of finance and resources to the entire city as a community, with public watchdogs to ensure that it takes place.

The question that must be posed against the recommendation is whether the problem is organisational or structural, or whether it is exacerbated by past Liberal administrations in the city of Liverpool, financial deprivation by central Government and the underspend that has been referred to. We cannot take in isolation the pseudo-populist charade engaged in by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill.

In a debate in the House on 18 March, it was made clear that, apart from underspending money made available for the people of Liverpool and designated for housing areas, this caretaker authority had already cut £50 million from the needs of the people of Liverpool.

In that debate the hon. Gentleman asked the Government to allow the district auditor to conduct an efficiency audit survey and to highlight areas in which savings could be made. That means cuts in services and jobs. The community councils would be unable to help to try to resolve those problems. Traditionally, the Labour party and workers have achieved everything through struggle, but all that the Liberal party wants to do is to stand aside from its responsibilities to the people of Liverpool as a whole and to the electors nationally. It pretends that problems can be solved by setting up a few bogus committees and councils. The Labour administration in Liverpool stood up to the bully boys on the Conservative Benches, and our achievements will stand for all time.

For 10 years a Liberal-Tory community council glossed over the deep-seated problems that face my city. For a period of three and a half years, by injecting cash, which is the key to all the problems in our neighbourhoods, the Labour administration in Liverpool started to put right some of the abnormalities. The Liberal resolution cancelled all that we had done. If this bogus exercise is allowed to become a reality, valuable time will be wasted. Liverpool's problems can be resolved only by the injection of some of the wealth that has been created by the people of Liverpool. Decent housing must be provided, as of right, together with services and jobs. Only in that way shall we improve the conditions that have been created by the Tory Government and their bedfellows, the Liberal party.

I shall not divide the House on this issue, Mr. Speaker. However, I am highlighting the audacity of these people and the experience of neighbourhood councils in Liverpool, just to expose them for what they are.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must follow his words with a shout of "No" when I put the Question.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Richard Wainwright, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Malcolm Thornton, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Cyril Smith, Mr. Michael Meadowcroft, Mr. Simon Hughes and Mr. David Alton.

Directly Elected Neighbourhood Councils

Mr. David Alton accordingly presented a Bill to give residents of British cities the right to establish directly elected neighbourhood councils and to make consequential provision for their constitution and resources: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 July 1987 and to be printed. [Bill 144.]

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

(Clauses Nos. 11, 18, 20 to 23, 33, 45, 147 and 160 and Schedule No. 4)

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair.*]

Ordered,

That the order in which proceedings in Committee of the whole House on the Finance Bill are to be taken shall be Clause 20, Clause 23, Clause 21, Clause 22, Clause 11, Clause 147, Clause 160, Clause 18, Clause 33, Schedule 4 and Clause 45.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Clause 20

CHARGE OF INCOME TAX FOR 1987-88

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It might be of assistance to you and to the Committee, and out of courtesy to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if I say on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that he has been unavoidably detained. He had intended to be present to hear the Chancellor's remarks and to make his contribution to the debate. He will join the Committee as soon as he is able to do so. In the meantime, I hope that the Committee will accept his apology.

4 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I am sure that the Committee is grateful to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) for that explanation.

It is wholly appropriate that we should start the Committee stage of this year's Finance Bill with a clause that goes to the heart of the difference between the parties. I might add that before the Budget I was urged by the Opposition not to cut income tax because the polls showed that nobody wanted lower taxes, and that after the Budget they accused me of indulging in a pre-election bribe. Their concept of an unpopular bribe certainly shows the total confusion of the Labour party, which manoeuvres like squid lost in their own ink.

If the proposal that is before the Committee today is unpopular, I can only say that the Government have consistently shown themselves prepared to take whatever measures are necessary in the interests of the British economy, however unpopular they may be at the time. If, on the other hand, it is popular, I can live with that.

By last year we had reduced the basic rate of income tax —which is the marginal rate of tax for 94 per cent. of all personal taxpayers and 90 per cent. of unincorporated businesses and the self-employed—from the 33 per cent. we inherited from Labour to 29 per cent. The question before the Committee today is whether it should be further reduced to 27 per cent. It would then be within two points of the objective set by my predecessor in 1979 of a basic rate of no more than 25p in the pound, an objective which, given the continuation of present policies, it should not take too long to achieve—income tax down from a third to a quarter.

We on this side of the Committee are in no doubt: the basic rate of tax should now come down to 27 per cent. The Labour party, the Liberal party and the SDP are equally adamant that income tax should not be reduced and are committed to voting against it. The difference could not be plainer, nor is it any accident, for the Conservative party is the only party committed to reducing the burden of taxation as and when it is prudent to do so—that is precisely what we have done—while the Opposition parties are in the business of increasing the burden of taxation, as every Labour Government there has ever been have clearly demonstrated.

It is true that when we first took office in 1979 we inherited a massive and unsustainable level of public borrowing which had to be brought under control if there was to be any prospect of bringing down inflation, to which we were committed. This initially involved, as we clearly explained at the time, an increase in the burden of taxation. But that phase was already over by the time we secured the overwhelming endorsement of the British people in the general election of 1983, and since then the path of taxation has been steadily downward.

The basic rate of tax this year will be 6p in the pound lower than the rate that we inherited from Labour, the lowest it has been since before the war. At the same time, personal allowances are now 22 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79 and the married man's allowance is at its highest level since the war. As a result, 1·4 million people have been taken out of income tax altogether, and tax thresholds in the United Kingdom are now around the international average. The overall burden of income tax is now some £12 billion lower than it would have been if we had kept Labour's tax regime and adjusted it for inflation —something which the Labour Government were not able to do in a number of years during the time they were in office.

The benefits of these tax reductions have been felt at all levels of income. The percentage of earnings taken in income tax and national insurance contributions combined is lower at all levels than if we had kept the Labour regime and indexed it. And real take-home pay —which also, of course, takes account of the effect of changes in indirect taxation—is appreciably higher at all income levels. This is in stark contrast to Labour's record in office. Single people at all levels were worse off by 1978-79 than at the start of Labour's period in office. Under this Government their real take-home pay is up by a fifth or more.

Take the married man on average earnings. Those without children were also worse off in 1978-79 than in 1973-74. Those with children did better, it is true. I shall quote the precise figures, because it is important that the Committee fully appreciate those cases where the Labour Government actually presided over an increase in living standards. The married man on average earnings, with two children, saw his real take-home pay go up by all of a half of 1 per cent. under Labour. That was all that the Labour Government achieved. Under this Government, it is up by more than 21 per cent.

I should like to take just one more specific example, because it is of some topical interest and concerns a group whom the Opposition like to pretend have been victimised by this Government. After the pay award announced last week, a typical nurse will have seen her real take-home pay rise by no less than 42·4 per cent. since 1978-79. If she is

married to a typical teacher, their combined take-home pay will also have risen by more than 40 per cent., whereas under Labour it rose by a mere 4 per cent.

The effect of this year's Budget alone is to increase the take-home pay of a married man on average earnings by almost £4 a week—quite apart from any further benefit that he may secure from the reduction in mortgage rates that comes into effect later this week.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) began with an apology for the absence from the debate of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who is still busying himself with his pudding. The hon Gentleman said nothing about the absence of any Labour Back Benchers. As this debate was trailed as their great opportunity to rant and rage against the cuts in income tax, does it not rather smack of bogus indignation that Labour cannot raise one Back-Bench Member to come to the debate?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Committee can observe that there is not one Labour Back Bencher in his place, with the exception of one PPS. The British people know the truth of what I have been saying. They know perfectly well how much better off they are than they were under Labour. That is why they will not be taken in for one moment by the desperate black propaganda launched by the Labour party this week.

Talking of that, I have to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the letter that he sent me, which I received today. It was addressed very properly to Mr. N. Lawson, 11 Downing street, London SW1. It began "Dear Supporter" and went on to say that Labour was hard up and to ask for money. If the Labour party wants to save money, it can cease writing letters to Downing street for a start. I hope that the hon. Member for Dagenham will pay attention, because the letter went on to say:

"we will be fighting on our record. While others will try the usual tactic of smear and half-truth, of mud slinging and personality politics, we will go with our record and our plans."

When the hon. Gentleman addresses the Committee, we all expect that he will obey his leader's injunction and come forward with Labour's record and Labour's plans, and will not come forward with any of the smears and half truths that we heard yesterday. We had all that business of the secret manifesto in 1983. It was codswallop then and it is codswallop now. It was totally ignored then and it will be totally ignored now. The British people know that it is the Labour party, with its massive public expenditure to finance, that will increase the burden of taxation again if it is given the chance. They know that, to pay for Labour's £34 billion public spending programme—an extra £34 billion over and above the levels in the Government's White Paper—would require either a doubling of the basic rate of income tax or a more than trebling of the standard rate of VAT.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear as far back as 1984 that we have no intention of extending VAT to food. Beyond that, the incidence of taxation has to be determined in the light of the budgetary needs at the time, and no responsible Government could conceivably take any other position. What is abundantly clear is that it is the Labour party that is in the business of putting taxes up, and the Conservative party that is in business of bringing taxes down, and no amount of scaremongering can obscure that basic fact. As this year's Budget Red Book clearly shows—I refer the Committee to table 2.6—the prospects on the basis of present policies are of a steady further reduction in taxation in the years ahead.

The gulf between the parties on the issue of tax is, in part, a profound difference of political philosophy. We believe that what people earn and save belong to them, and that the state should take from them only what is necessary to discharge the functions that only the state can perform, leaving people free to make their own choices and to pursue their own destiny. The Opposition parties believe that all resources belong to the State, that all important decisions should be taken by the state, and that people should be "given"—that is the word they use—whatever pocket money is needed to keep them quiet.

The gulf between the parties on tax is also at the heart of the difference between the two sides of the Committee over the conduct of economic policy. The Opposition start from the proposition that the cure for any economic problem lies in state intervention, which inevitably implies ever-increasing state spending and ever-increasing taxation to pay for that spending.

The policy of the Government is clear, and distinct. As the dismal experience of the 1970s demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt, the crucial role of fiscal and monetary policy must be to control and conquer inflation. Within that framework, improved economic performance depends on the success of individual enterprise. That requires the Government resolutely to pursue a whole range of policies designed to remove the impediments to enterprise—through deregulation, through privatisation and through reducing the burden of taxation. This prescription is now accepted throughout the world. All major countries have now embarked on policies of deregulation. Most have embarked on programmes of privatisation, openly acknowledging the lead given by the United Kingdom.

As for the burden of taxation, all the other members of the Group of Five have either cut their income tax rates or have announced plans to do so—so has Sweden, which has traditionally been a high tax country, and so have Australia and New Zealand. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Dagenham has not kept up with his compatriots, because the Labour Government in New Zealand are following the same economic policy as the British Government and are a great deal more enlightened than he is. Among the developing countries, India is reducing taxation. The last three of those countries have Socialist Governments. On this, as on so many issues, it is the Opposition parties that are out of step and out of touch. Everyone else knows that the only route to higher living standards and more jobs is through a more dynamic economy, and that the only route to a more dynamic economy is through lower tax rates. It is no accident that the two most successful economies in the Group of Five, and the two with the lowest levels of unemployment, the United States and Japan, are the two with the lowest burden of public spending and taxation.

Moreover, the dynamic effect of reductions in tax rates can often mean not lower but higher revenues, thus leading to the scope for still further reductions in taxation. For example, despite the reductions that we have made, inheritance tax is expected this year to yield almost 50 per cent. more in real terms than capital transfer tax did in 1978-79. The yield of capital gains tax is forecast to be 80 per cent. higher in real terms, and stamp duty is up by 140 per cent. As for income tax, the higher rates applying in

[Mr. Lawson]

1987-88 are, of course, much lower than the absurd penal rates that Labour enforced, but they are expected to yield 90 per cent. more in real terms, and the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers now contribute 28 per cent. of income tax, compared to 24 per cent. in Labour's last year. The greatly increased yield of corporation tax, reflecting greatly increased company profitability, is clearly connected with the reform of corporate taxation which I introduced in 1984, which brought the rate of tax on company profits in this country to the lowest in the industrialised world.

4.15 pm

Mr. Gould: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that a forthcoming article in *Fiscal Studies* will show that, contrary to his assertion that the 1984 changes in corporate taxation would be revenue neutral, those changes have turned out to produce £1 billion more in revenue than the previous regime would have done in these circumstances?

Mr. Lawson: I shall, of course, look at that article and have it properly evaluated. The increase in the yield of corporation tax is a result of the enormous increase in profitability that has occurred, in part because of the dynamic effects of the change in the corporation tax regime.

There is, as I have said, a profound difference between the two sides of the Committee over economic policy, of which tax policy is an integral part. The policies that we have been pursuing have been abundantly vindicated by the results that they have brought. It is no accident that, this year, I have been able to reduce taxes by £2½ billion and to increase public spending on priority areas by £4¾ billion, while reducing public borrowing below its previously planned level by some £3 billion. For the Opposition to claim that they would have used the money differently is totally irrelevant, because with their policies it would never have been there in the first place.

As a result of our policies, the economy today is sounder than it has been at any time since the war—a fact that is increasingly recognised throughout the world. Of course, there is always scope for further improvement —that has always been so and will always be so in every country.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): My right hon. Friend was dealing with public spending and the economy's ability after five or six years of consecutive economic growth to afford increased public spending. Does he take account of the strong case, which many of us discover in our constituencies, for allowing pensioners to share in the fruits of this economic growth?

Mr. Lawson: I am glad to say that pensioners have fully shared in the fruits of the economic growth. Over the period in which we have been in office, pensioners' incomes have risen faster than the average for other people. My hon. Friend should look at the figures. I shall be happy to write to him about this matter.

It is fair to say that, at the present time, the biggest problems lie in the rest of the world as the United States and Japan, in particular, struggle to adjust successfully to the massive but necessary change the has occurred over the past two years in the dollar/yen exchange rate. It is of the first importance to all of us that those two powerful nations pull back from the blind alley of a trade war and instead concentrate on measures to put their own houses in order, which in turn will underpin, as is highly desirable, the present world pattern of exchange rates.

Meanwhile, the British economy is indeed, as the headline of the leading article in today's *Financial Times* describes us, "an island of success". I described some of that success story in my Budget speech last month—how our growth this year will be the highest in the industrialised world, with inflation remaining low, and how by the end of this year we will have registered the longest period of steady growth, at close to 3 per cent. a year, that the British economy has known since the war. I described the massive strength of our external position, while at home unemployment is now firmly on a downward trend. All that was on the basis of deliberately cautious forecasts.

I shall not be publishing a further forecast until the autumn, in the usual way, but all the indicators that have been published since the Budget confirm that, if anything, we are doing even better than I suggested then. The PSBR for 1986-87 has come out lower than I forecast in the Budget. Inflation, too, is slightly lower than I implied in the Budget. The current account of the balance of payments is also performing better so far than I predicted. Output appears to be rising, if anything, rather faster.

This is fully reflected in the CBI's "Quarterly Industrial Trends Survey", published yesterday, which is of course confined to manufacturing industry, about which the Opposition always profess particular concern. All in all, that survey shows manufacturing industry's optimism to be at or near the highest level ever recorded, whether in respect of output, orders or exports. Of course, this was before the further cut in interest rates yesterday, which I am sure the whole Committee will welcome.

Those are the fruits of the policies that we have been consistently pursuing since we first took office.

When he rises to speak, the hon. Member for Dagenham will, I have no doubt, paint a different picture —one of doom and despair, depression and disaster. Certainly, I very much hope he does, because the more that right hon. and hon. Members opposite do so, the more nails they hammer into the coffin of Labour's credibility. All it does is to demonstrate in the clearest possible way that they are wholly out of touch with what is happening in the real world.

For the Opposition to criticise us for having increased taxation in 1979-81, when we were clearing up the mess that they left behind, is not merely an impertinence, it is Satan denouncing sin, coming from a party which is itself implicity committed to a massive further increase in the tax burden on ordinary people. The only 27 per cent. which the Labour Government ever knew was 27 per cent. inflation—and that is what we would see again if ever they were to regain office. No wonder they have committed themselves to reversing the 2p cut in income tax in the Budget. They are pleading guilty to this lesser offence to divert attention from the fact that to finance their overall spending plans would mean doubling the basic rate of income tax.

As for the Liberals and the SDP—it would be wrong to forget them altogether—they say that they will vote against the 2p reduction in income tax, but do not know whether, if they were ever to be in a position to influence

events, they would reverse it or not. Their confusion on income tax parallels their confusion on every other aspect of economic policy, not to say more widely.

The whole world now recognises that our policies have created an economy that is stronger than at any time since the war. The policies of the Opposition would destroy that strength. An integral part of our policy has been the reduction in income tax, and clause 20 is a further step forward. So long as this Government is in office, it will not be the last. I would remind the House of the precise words used by my predecessor in 1979, which I have reaffirmed before and reaffirm today: our long-term objective is a basic rate of

"no more than 25 per cent." — [*Official Report*, 12 June 1979; Vol. 968, c. 261.]

We do not pursue policies to meet arbitrary targets, and then sit back. We pursue them because they are right, and because they work, and we shall continue to do so.

The contrast with the Opposition could not be greater. We believe in building on success; they believe in a return to the failures of the past. We believe in a free economy and a free society; they believe in state planning and state regulation. The vote at the end of the debate will be a vote of the first importance, for it will establish beyond doubt, once and for all, which party is the party of lower taxation, and which parties are the parties of higher taxation. I commend clause 20 to the Committee.

Mr. Gould: We oppose the clause because it is wrong. It is wrong economically and it is wrong socially. We oppose it first because, in our present economic condition, there are better things to do with £2·5 billion than to give it away in tax cuts. We oppose the clause because giving away tax cuts is likely to harm our economy. We oppose it because it forms part of an overall taxation strategy with which we profoundly disagree. We have to look at the clause against the background of the Government's tax record. The Chancellor, in his peroration, said that the debate will show which party is the party of low taxation. Therefore, we are entitled to look at the Government's claims in that respect.

The first point that should be made is that, of course, the overall effects of all the taxation changes made by the present Government have been regressive in their consequences. At the end of the day, they have benefited only those at the top of the income scale. Only those people have had real tax cuts in absolute and proportionate terms. Let us examine that claim. Again today, the Chancellor rehearsed an argument that we heard earlier from the Financial Secretary in his winding up speech on Second Reading last week. The Conservative claim has always been that it would reduce the tax burden for the country and for ordinary families. That is a fairly clear statement, a fairly clear claim and a clear objective. No one is in any doubt about what it means and what would be required if that claim were to be made.

We heard from the Chancellor and from the Financial Secretary a careful, complex attempt to deal with the awkward truth that, bearing in mind absolute rates of taxation and proportionate burdens of taxation, for the vast majority of people in this country—and indeed for the country as a whole—a greater proportion of income and of national wealth is now taken by taxation than was taken in 1979. Conservative Members try to deal with that awkward truth by talking about other matters, such as real take-home pay and real earnings—about anything other than the precise nature of their claim to have been a tax-cutting Government.

It is not we who wish to introduce the matter. It is not we who say that it is a matter of enormous importance. But since the Government insist that that is what their record shows, and since this is the test by which they themselves insist that that they should be judged, surely we are entitled to say that the facts simply do not bear that out. In case any hon. Members on the Government Benches are inclined to contest what I say, let me warn them, before they make such a rash claim, that they should recognise that the Financial Secretary, in addition to all the other things that he said in winding up the Second Reading debate, actually admitted:

"of course, a person on average earnings"—

that includes many on above-average earnings as well—

"is paying more pounds in tax—he is even paying a higher percentage in tax". — [*Official Report*, 22 April, 1987; Vol.114, c. 760.]

On my reckoning, that simple admission—that simple statement—means that no credence whatsoever can be placed on the claim that the Government have been a tax-cutting Government.

Mr. Lawson: If the hon. Gentleman had been paying attention — he usually does, but on this occasion he clearly did not—he would have heard me deal with his point in my opening remarks. I clearly said that between 1979 and 1981, when we were clearing up the mess that we were left by the Labour Government, when we had to bring down a massive and totally unsustainable public sector borrowing requirement, we were obliged to increase the burden of taxation. Not only did I say that today, but we explained it clearly at the time, and the hon. Gentleman will find that in my Zurich speech of January 1981. That period had already come to an end by the time we went to the people in 1983 and had our mandate endorsed by the British people. Since then, the burden of taxation has gone steadily down. That demonstrates our credentials as a tax-cutting Government and a tax-cutting party. That is the direct answer to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Gould: That statement sounded remarkably like a lengthy and unconvincing excuse coupled with a confession. It was an explanation—an unconvincing one — of why what I said was right and why the Government's claims have been wrong. It simply gave us some rationale for the confession made earlier by the Financial Secretary. Of course, the Chancellor can explain until he is blue in the face why he put up taxes between 1979 and 1981 and why, for example, his predecessor doubled VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent. Of course, the point might be taken that it was not an actual doubling. In April 1979, his predecessor said:

"We have absolutely no intention of doubling VAT."

That is a direct quotation. The raising of VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent. was just 1 per cent. short of an actual lie. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer wants to take up that point, by all means let him. However, his lengthy intervention sounded like bluster designed to get away from the simple fact on which the Government are clearly very unwilling to be hooked — the Government keep drawing attention to this, not the Opposition—that they have raised the burden of taxation absolutely and proportionately for the great majority of families.

4.30 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): How much more tax would a man on average earnings be paying if the tax rates and thresholds that we inherited from the previous Labour Government had been indexed? I believe that the answer is about £500.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is requiring me to have the ability of a computer to answer a totally hypothetical question, which again is no more than a ploy designed to deflect attention from this simple point.

I am very willing to move on from this point. However, Conservative Members clearly wish me to remain with it. Therefore, I can do no more than reassert the concession made by the Financial Secretary and the point that was clearly made by the Chancellor in his intervention. In case anyone in the Committee wants to dispute the matter further, I will provide one more opportunity. The present Government, during their period in office, have raised the burden of taxation for the nation as a whole, for the average family and for most ordinary families absolutely and proportionately. That is a clear and accurate statement. It is on the record. It cannot be challenged. It rests on an assertion made by the Financial Secretary.

Mr. Forman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, we must really move on. I suspect that the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) is likely to do even more damage to his cause than has been done so far.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is not prepared to give way to Conservative Back Benchers—and I regret that—but I am grateful that he has given way to me. As the hon. Gentleman is so interested in the burden of taxation, does he believe that the burden should be reduced or increased? Will he answer that, or does he think that the burden of taxation should remain exactly as it is?

Mr. Gould: As a preliminary remark, I notice that the Chancellor has again not taken the opportunity of disputing the simple truth that I have explained on several occasions. However, since he has asked this question, I must state that the Opposition have absolutely no responsibility for the current level of taxation. The Government's record is now under scrutiny. The Government have brought taxation to its present level. They are making false claims that I am obliged to knock down — *[Interruption.]* I will answer the Chancellor's question. Unlike Conservative Members, we have no inhibitions about answering questions.

The Government have mismanaged the economy. In addition to the other damage that they have done to the economy and in addition to the desperate need for investment in the economy, they have increased the burden of taxation. It is not the Opposition's responsbility to accept that level of taxation, but we must accept it because that is what we will inherit.

The Opposition are happy to state that if there is money available in the state of the economy that we inherit—and I have a long passage in my speech which I will come to in this respect if the Chancellor will be patient—that money should be used not to reduce income tax, but for investment. That is quite clear and we have no inhibitions about making that claim. We believe that money should be used for that purpose. The tax burden that the Government have established for the time being, which is higher than they inherited, should be maintained for the moment in the interests of the economy because of the weakness of the economy that we will inherit from the present Government.

Mr. Forman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I am sorry. I must press on.

While there is clearly great interest in the question of the tax burden, I would have thought that Conservative Members would realise by now that their claim—which doubtless they will blithely continue to make in the coming months and years — that this Government are a tax-cutting Government flies in the face of the facts. All I can do is to lay the facts before the Committee and invite the British people to make their judgment. If the Committee really wants me to reiterate the truth, I will. However, I believe that I would be in danger of trying the patience of the Committee if I were to do that.

I want to make it perfectly clear that the changes proposed in the clause do very little to remedy the picture that I have described. Even after the changes have taken place, as has been made clear in written answers provided by the Financial Secretary—and that is presumably why he had no option but to make his confession — the burden of taxation will be greater. We are not even talking about changes that will at last make good the Government's claim to be a tax-cutting Government.

Furthermore, the Government have characteristically chosen to use the available money to reduce taxes in such a way as to produce the usual regressive effect. If the Government had been really keen to use money to reduce taxation, or even income tax, they could have done so in a way that would have benefited those at the lower end of the income scale. However, the Government chose not to do that. They again chose cynically to give the major benefits to those who are already best off in our society. If they were interested in distributing income, they could have used the money to make good the real value of child benefit. However, they chose not to. Instead, they have again given tax benefits principally to the best off. The British people will not easily forgive that. They will recognise what is happening.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Gentleman should not be allowed to get away with that assertion. If he looks at clause 20, he will learn that there has been no increase in the higher rate bands, as opposed to last year.

Mr. Gould: However, over the total period, those at the top of the scale have obtained enormous benefits, and a flat rate cut will increase benefits for those at the top of the scale.

The Opposition are opposed to the Government's long-term plans to shift the balance from direct to indirect taxation. I do not imagine that the Chancellor, his Minsters or any of his Back-Bench colleagues would dispute the fact that the Chancellor and his Ministers have frequently said that their long-term intention is to bring about that shift from direct to indirect taxation. In his 1984 Budget speech, the Chancellor said that an extension in VAT was the counterpart to cuts in income tax. That was the Chancellor's stated objective in 1984. A former Tory Cabinet Minister, now an EEC Commissioner in Brussels, is preparing measures which would abolish zero rating for VAT altogether. We watch with interest to see the Government's response to that proposal.

Yesterday there was a new development. I have on at least four occasions challenged the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary — I may even have challenged the Financial Secretary — to rise at the Dispatch Box and deny that work has been carried out in the Treasury with regard to a major extension of VAT. On each of those occasions the Chancellor and his Ministers sat tight-lipped. They did not move a muscle. They did not utter a sound. It was left to their right hon. Friend the chairman of the Conservative party to lift a little corner on the truth, not in the Chamber or in Committee, but in a television studio, and under some considerable pressure. He confirmed for the first time that indeed there had been a study. Of course, he did all that he could to minimise its importance. He said that the study had been carried out by some little academic study group and it really had nothing to do with the Government. He said that academics get on with such studies all the time, although he thought that there had been some small Treasury contribution to the funds to set up that study. For the first time we have had an admission that a study has been carried out.

Mr. Lawson *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I am delighted that the Chancellor is for the first time showing signs of rising on this point, but before he intervenes could I state that we need to know the terms of reference of that study. Who carried it out? Have conclusions been reached? What action is proposed to be taken on the conclusions? What part will the conclusions play in the Government's plans if they are re-elected for a third term? If the Chancellor would care to answer all or any of those questions, the Committee would be immensely gratified.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is getting desperate, because there is nothing secret or hidden about the work to which my right hon. Friend referred. The Economic and Social Research Council, the Treasury and others have been jointly funding academic research on taxation since 1983. Applications for research proposals on indirect taxes were advertised in *The Guardian* in 1985. When the Labour party has to scrabble around to produce examples such as those to justify its ludicrous claims about the Government's intentions it shows just how threadbare it is. No work has been commissioned or undertaken inside or outside the Treasury on any proposal by Ministers to increase VAT or extend its coverage.

Mr. Gould: I notice how carefully the Chancellor chose his concluding remarks — that no work has been done on proposals by Ministers. I wonder whose proposals were considered in that case. He carefully avoided answering any of the questions that I posed to him. If the study was as publicly known as the Chancellor suggested, why, when the Chancellor was challenged on four embarrassing occasions to come clean, did he not utter a word? Why was it that the first time we heard of this was when a non-Treasury Minister, under considerable pressure, was forced to scrabble around for an answer?

If the Chancellor would care to intervene to give us any of the answers to the questions I posed — what were the terms of reference of that study group; what were its conclusions; and what action is proposed to be taken in the light of those conclusions — we could test his claims that this study is of no consequence and that it implies nothing for the Government's plan for a third term. I see that the Chancellor, characteristically, does not propose to answer those questions — the questions that really matter. He answered in carefully chosen words drafted for him in advance, but he cannot answer the real and crucial questions which would reveal the extent of the Government's intention to shift the burden from income tax to VAT.

It is perfectly clear from the Chancellor's silence that we are in the familiar situation where the British people are being offered income tax cuts before the general election and an increase in VAT after the general election. That is the truth of the matter and that is what will be taken from this debate by the British people.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not interesting that when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition challenged the Prime Minister yesterday on whether she is actively opposed to any increase in the rate of VAT, or any extension in its scope, the Prime Minister refused to answer? If it is true that a re-elected Tory Government — it is not likely to happen, because the Tories are not likely to be re-elected — would increase VAT, as we say they would, would that not wash away the few shillings gained by people from the tax cuts, because the average family would pay far more as a result of increases in indirect taxation?

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is significant that the Chancellor has had 24 hours longer in which to prepare some sort of answer to the question on which the Prime Minister dropped an obvious dead bat yesterday. If the Prime Minister had been able to deny our assertions yesterday, she would have done so. The truth is that an extension of VAT, as we believe is proposed by the Government for a third term in office, would increase the average family budget by over £10 a week. The Government have that prospect in store for ordinary families.

4.45 pm

The tax cuts would impact on the economy, because the use of this money to reduce income tax by 2p in the pound is likely to damage, rather than to help, the economy. The first point is that a cut in income tax is the most inflationary way of using this money to cut taxes, because it would suck in imports, make the balance of payments decline and therefore reduce the value of the pound, pushing up inflation. It would also impact directly on the balance of trade.

The Treasury forecasts a trade deficit in manufactured goods of £8 billion this year and an overall trade deficit of £2·5 billion. I hear a call "So what?" from the Government Back Benches. It reminds me that, when we pointed out the turnaround in our trade in manufactures of £13 billion since 1978, the Chancellor said, "That is neither here nor there". As I pointed out in that debate, the volume of production worth £13 billion is certainly not here, but it is there — it is in Frankfurt, Cologne and Tokyo. Those goods are being produced there, and the jobs needed to produce the goods are being created there. Our balance of trade deficit in manufactures is of the gravest significance for our economic future. Any measure, such as cuts in income tax, which will suck in further goods from abroad, close down British factories and throw further British workers on to the dole is likely to do grave damage to our economy.

[Mr. Gould]

Let us look at the argument about the beneficent effects of income tax cuts on incentive. We do not hear much of it today, but we used to hear a great deal of how income tax cuts would make everybody work harder and longer. It is difficult for the Chancellor or any other Minister to make that argument today, because a study commissioned by the Treasury, published recently, called "Taxation and family labour supply in Great Britain", concluded that even substantial changes would make virtually no difference whatsoever to the number of hours worked by most people. That study, commissioned by the Government, blows out of the water the reasoning which lies behind the case for improving incentives through cutting taxation.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The Treasury study dealt with the incentives for those in work; it did not deal with incentives in the taxation system for those out of work. Can the hon. Gentleman explain how somebody who is out of work in the north-east is more likely to take work if his income tax were to be increased and his take-home pay reduced, as it would be if the Opposition's vote tonight were successful?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman thinks he is making a separate point, but it is exactly the same point as was considered by the Brown report. It is simply a question of incentives to work additional or any hours to improve one's income above the current and presumed level. This reports bears out what common sense would have told Ministers a long time ago: if one reduces taxation, the likely effect on the ability or willingness of people to work is that they will work less and will earn the same income for less work. Many people, on purely common sense grounds, would choose to respond to that by not working as hard.

Furthermore, the Government have to explain why tax incentives are required to get those in work who are at the top end of the income scale to work hard, whereas the disciplines required to force unemployed people to work are cuts in benefits and cuts in pay. That is the difference. That is the affront to common sense that the Government have to explain. That is the socially divisive policy to which they have attached their name and attitudes.

Mr. Forman: The import of the point that the hon. Gentleman has just made seems to be that if the Labour party were to take office, which I doubt, it would seek to put up income tax and thereby get people to work harder. Is that the conclusion that he is drawing?

Mr. Gould: The argument that the hon. Gentleman postulates is not one to which we have ever paid any attention. It is the Government who maintain that the incentive effect of taxes is crucial and it is the Government's own study that shows that that claim is ill-founded. Again, the Government put up a target which is all too easily knocked down. But it is not our target. It is not an argument that Labour Members would wish to make.

The major objection to these tax cuts is that they pass up a real opportunity to use resources which have come in an uncovenanted way to the Chancellor. They have come, for example, because corporation tax, contrary to the Chancellor's assertions earlier, has proved to be a more buoyant revenue raiser than was foreseen when the 1984 tax changes were made. He has used that money not for the purpose of investing in the real needs of our economy, which is desperately crying out for that investment, but for purposes that will harm that economy.

The Government's model of the economy and the London Business School's computer model of the economy, neither of which is particularly confident or helpful to our case, show clearly that the Government's chosen course of tax cuts is four times less effective than if that money were invested in the same quantities in our economy to create employment and increase output. If we had used that £2·5 billion, the models of the economy—on which, again, we place little reliance, but which the Government have always maintained are important guides to economic policy — show a 4:1 ratio between the number of jobs created by investment in our economy and tax cuts.

That is the chance that the Chancellor has passed up. That is the extent to which he has turned his back on the unemployed. With £2·5 billion at his disposal—he had more, but he has chosen to use £2·5 billion for tax cuts —he could have invested in our infrastructure, in our skill training and directly in our industry. He could have done all those things, but he has allowed a situation to develop in which manufacturing investment languishes at 20 per cent. below its 1979 level.

The Chancellor asks about the CBI survey. Why does he not look at "Fabric of the Nation", the report produced by the CBI complaining that shortage of investment was ruining our industrial infrastructure? Why does he not look at the Manpower Services Commission, another Government-sponsored agency, which says that we are training eight times fewer engineers than the Japanese? Those are the things on which the money could have been spent. Those are the things on which a Labour Government would spend that money. The real charge against the Government is that, for cynical electoral reasons, they have passed up an opportunity which could have benefited the economy.

The case against tax cuts is so substantial that it is impossible to believe that they have been proposed by the Government for any better reason than that they make the cynical judgment that the floating voter is as avaricious, selfish, short-sighted and unconcerned for the general interest as the average Tory Back Bencher.

That judgment is as mistaken as it is cynical. It is a judgment that is not shared by the British people. Indeed, it is not even shared by the British Institute of Management, which, in February, said that managers preferred some specific increases in Government spending to a cut in taxation. Only a quarter sought tax cuts before some increase in public expenditure. The increases in public expenditure on infrastructure that were announced in the public expenditure White Paper—who was saying that they had not got it?—were not enough, according to the British Institute of Management. It said that managers strongly support direct measures to tackle persistent high unemployment.

That is the option that was available to the Government. That is an option recognised not just by the Labour party but by many people in society, the British Institute of Management and many other institutions. All the opinion polls tell us that the British people reject the cynical bargain offered by the Government. They will reject that cynical deal. They know that tax cuts are not

the way to obtain decent housing, and proper pensions, schools and housing. They know that that is not the way to get what only community provision can make available to them. For that reason, they will reject the Government's offer, as we shall do tonight.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): It is always a pleasure to listen to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Most of us look upon him with generous feelings and some friendship. However, we feel some sympathy for him in advocating a policy on behalf of the Labour party with which he does not agree.

It is obvious that with the hon. Gentleman's intellect and experience of finance there is no way in which he can talk about the Government giving away £2·5 billion. On thresholds, he will agree with me that the Government have kept well in front of inflation and that the lower paid are better off than they would have been if we had followed the principles followed by the Labour Government on the starting rate of tax. I have no doubt that he will agree that the standard of living in Britain has increased tremendously since 1975, which was not the case before the Government took office.

The hon. Gentleman says that we have not decreased direct taxation, but he is not facing the facts. The standard rate was 33p in the pound and it is now—or will be—27p. The top rate was 98p and is now 60p. He talks about the 2p reduction being inflationary, but the logic of that is that we should go back to 33p. Apparently, if a reduction of 2p in the standard rate of taxation is inflationary, to avoid that we should go back to 33p. However, I remind him that when it was 33p we had inflation of about 27 per cent. Now we have inflation of about 4 per cent.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the reduction in the standard rate sucking in imports, but if he looks at the Labour Government's balance of payments record, for practically every year of that Government there was a deficit in our balance of payments. That position has been completely reversed by this Government.

I do not think that the hon. Gentleman believes all that his colleagues forecast. Just before the 1983 election the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that inflation would be in double figures. Double figures means 10 per cent., but it has not been 10 per cent. since 1983, and it is 4 per cent. now. Another of his colleagues said that unemployment would rise to 24 per cent., but in fact it is 11 per cent. It was also said that the National Health Service would be dismantled within five years, but that has not happened. It was said that we would become a bankrupt nation and that output would go down, but since 1983 output has increased tremendously. It was said that pensioners would be much worse off after 1983 under another Conservative Government, but under this Government the pensioners have had an increase 4·5 times greater than under the previous Labour regime.

The VAT smear with regard to food, and so on, that is now going around has been answered by my right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Prime Minister.

What the Labour party has not said, and what the hon. Member for Dagenham avoided, is the effect of its policies on VAT. I remind the hon. Gentleman that if the promises of his hon. Friends, and even the official policy of his party, were implemented, they would lead to a VAT rate of about 49 per cent.

The hon. Member for Dagenham did not deal with what the Labour party's plans for increased expenditure would mean for the standard rate of tax. It would mean a standard rate of tax of just over 50p in the pound as a starting point and VAT would be about 48 or 49 per cent. The Labour party should address itself to these points and explain to the electorate what it plans to do.

5 pm

The hon. Member for Dagenham said that the Chancellor underestimated the amount that he would receive from corporation tax. The reason for the Chancellor receiving more from corporation tax is the increased profitability of companies.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Sir William Clark: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish and get my facts right before he attempts to distort them.

We must realise that, if the profitability of a company increases, by necessity the Chancellor's take is greater.

Mr. Gould: I do not dispute the point that the hon. Gentleman has made, but he fails to take the one that I made. Far from being revenue neutral, the changes that were announced in 1984 — accepting the level of profitability of the corporate sector today — have produced £1 billion more in corporation tax than would have been the case without those changes. That is nothing to do with profitability.

Sir William Clark: This worries me. The hon. Member for Dagenham is the Labour party spokesman on finance. If he believes that the neutrality of corporation tax is not dependent on the profitability of companies, he is whistling in the dark. Obviously, one can reduce taxes and receive a greater take if the income of a company increases.

I cannot understand the Opposition's claims of gloom and doom with regard to the Budget. The CBI, which mainly represents manufacturing industry, is extremely optimistic and bullish. There is no question but that the economy is in better shape than it has been for many years.

Let us look at the public sector borrowing requirement. I was surprised that last year's borrowing requirement was so low, and on that I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. The Chancellor is not over-optimistic. He takes a very pragmatic approach to the outcome of the year's finances. The public sector borrowing requirement is very low at £4 billion. That achievement is not recognised by many people in this country. Output is going up.

The Labour party gives me the impression—I am sure that it gives the rest of the country the same impression—that it is the party of higher taxation. It always has been. The history of Labour Governments since the end of the war shows that they have always increased taxes. Conservative Administrations have reduced them.

The hon. Member for Dagenham—I welcome this—said that he was pressing my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on his plans for his third term. That is fairly defeatist talk on behalf of the Labour party. Apparently, it has realised that we shall have a third term and that, with the advent of polling day, my right hon. Friend will still be Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I welcome clause 20 because I am convinced that it is right. As a starting rate 27p is still too high, and I welcome

[Sir William Clark]

what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said about the target being 25p. I noticed—I will not press him on this point—that he did not say what the higher rate would be. At some time I should like to tell him what I think the top rate should be.

Anybody — including the hon. Member for Dagenham—who says that this is an election or bribery Budget and that the reduction of 2p in the standard rate of tax has been made to gain votes should think again. I wonder what the Labour party would say if it went through every Budget since 1979. Direct taxation has been reduced in each successive Budget. There was no election in 1980, 1981, 1982—in 1983 there was—1984, 1985 and 1986, but there has been a continual steady reduction in the burden of taxation. The lower we can get direct taxation, the greater the incentive for people to work, which is what we want for a prosperous society. That is what we are becoming, because we are in a much more prosperous situation today than we have been for many years.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton South): The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) referred to taxation and reductions in taxation, but in this clause we are only dealing with the reduction of income tax.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was right to point out that if one is talking about all taxes—customs duties, employees' national insurance contributions, VAT and the whole range of taxes—the Government have increased the burden of taxation.

We are dealing with income tax, and whether it should be reduced by the 2p that the Chancellor is proposing. The Chancellor said that it was the policy of the Government, and the Conservative party's view, that income taxes should be reduced as and when prudent. I was pleased to hear him say that. However, unless we can deal with unemployment, the problems affecting the Health Service, education and training, housing and many others such as the lack of research and development in industry and the brain drain, it would not be prudent to reduce income tax. If we can start to deal with those problems in a substantial manner, we can see no reason for keeping income tax or any other taxes a penny higher than we must.

We would have preferred to see the Chancellor in his speech today and in his Budget speech and Ministers in their speeches pay much more attention not to the inflated, exaggerated claims about the performance of the economy at the present time but to some of the problems that face the country, some of which have been exacerbated by the policies of the Government after nine years. It is to those problems that we should be addressing our minds this evening because they are the long-term problems which, if not overcome, will undermine the long-term success of the economy and industry. They are the problems to which the people of this country want to see their Government addressing their attention and resources.

Let me deal first with what is undoubtedly, in most people's minds, the No. 1 problem facing the country—to which the Chancellor's Budget pays hardly any attention — unemployment. All the evidence we have from consistent findings in opinion polls, from our experience as Members of Parliament in our constituencies and throughout the history of the past three or four years shows that unemployment has been the anxiety about which the people have felt most strongly. However, the Government have paid little attention to it in speech after speech and policy after policy.

The reality is that, after all this time of Conservative rule, we still have in excess of 3 million people available for work. This figure includes those who are not on the register, because those on the register are simply those registered for benefit, and there are many more people who want to work. Those of us who represent areas of high unemployment — my county has the highest level of unemployment of any in Great Britain, except the Western Isles—believe that unemployment at over 20 per cent. is a scandal and should be a top priority for the Government.

Before the Budget, we put forward proposals on how we believe that the Government should be using their resources to get those people back to work and make it possible for them to seek fulfilment in work, with a better income. We showed how the economy would benefit by the increased wealth that would be created if that unused capacity, that unused resource of people, was in use.

We believe that, by embarking on a programme for expansion of some £4·9 billion, we can, over three years, get about 1 million people back to work. That will still leave an unacceptably high level of unemployed people. I wish that the House and its Committees would spend more time considering the problems that every party in the House knows will be there. We shall have at least 2 million people wanting work, no matter which party wins the general election and no matter what policies are introduced.

That is why we believe that the second priority for the Government, rather than cutting income tax, is to deal with that problem of unemployment, which means that a substantial number of people in Britain today are facing considerable hardships. Furthermore, the benefits for pensioners and those hardest hit by unemployment and the recession should be increased.

Thirdly, we believe that one must consider the long-term future of British industry and the British economy, and we believe that a number of measures are necessary to build for that future. Foremost among those I put education and training. When the Government came into office in 1979, they began to destroy the training system. They abolished the training boards and the apprentice opportunities that used to be available to thousands of young people when they left school.

After a time, as unemployment went through the roof and the Government began to get very worried about the electoral consequences of the level of unemployment and realised that they must do something for the unemployed young people, they introduced the youth training scheme and spatchcocked it together. We were delighted that the Government introduced that scheme. We pressed them to extend it to two years and we were delighted when they did so. We supported the Government when they introduced the youth training scheme, but the scheme still has a great deal further to go if it is to make a contribution to the skills and future of our young people in the way that it should.

5.15 pm

The first and most important thing that must happen to YTS, apart from putting extra resources into it and ensuring that people get the skilled training that they need for the rest of their lives, is to give it an accredited status so that it can be used to get further qualifications. It is no good doing a two-year youth training scheme if at the end

of that time one has nothing of value to take either to an educational or training institution or to an employer, such as an O-level or a CSE.

I am pleased that Ministers have responded to my pleas and those of my colleagues for a move in that direction, and that the Manpower Services Commission is working on a programme to get accreditation for the youth training scheme so that it dovetails with the rest of our education and training system and gives young people a real opportunity. Putting resources into that is a top priority if we are to succeed against competing countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, America, and Germany, all of which have education and training systems that make ours look sick.

There is a great thirst for education in places such as Hong Kong, where half the population is under 21. The small country of South Korea, with 15 million people, is producing four times as many graduates in information technology as both this country and West Germany combined. That is the challenge that faces our country, not the challenge of people in work getting a cut in income tax. We want more resources to go to education and training so that we can match the output of graduates and skilled people from our educational and training institutions with those of other countries such as Japan, America and Taiwan.

One sees in the education institutions of the world people from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other countries with an enormous thirst for education. We must encourage that thirst here and provide the resources for it.

As a priority, the Government must also pay attention to our manufacturing industries, to research and development and to ensuring that highly qualified people from educational institutions come into industry and make it a top priority. It has been palpably obvious to everybody since the Government came into office that they do not care a hoot about manufacturing industry. We have heard all this talk about the services industry and we heard it again today. The Tories say, "Don't worry about the deficit in manufactured goods. Don't worry about the billions of pounds and record level of manufactured deficit."

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): How does the hon. Gentleman explain the fact that action by Government is not always necessary? How does he explain the great recovery in our textile industry?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: The textile industry is like other industries. It was hit in the face and knocked flat on its back by the Government's policies from 1979 to 1981-82. It is now getting back up on its knees again and Ministers say that that is a wonderful miracle. One industry after another has been in that position. They have been almost destroyed. Many have gone out of business, which is why we have lost 22 per cent. of our manufacturing industry.

All that has happened because of the policies that the Chancellor has demonstrated that he wants us all to forget about. He wants to forget about what the Conservative party did to this country between 1979 and 1982. That was the black period for manufacturing industry, as one company after another went bankrupt and the level of unemployment went up through the roof. It has stayed up there ever since. That was the period that the Government want to wipe out. They are like Stalin: they want to forget parts of their history; they want to forget that that period existed. Let me tell the Chancellor and his colleagues that we will not allow them to forget the 1979-82 period when they followed their monetarist policies.

Now we are witnessing a change. It has occurred in the past few months and was contained in the Chancellor's autumn statement. Public expenditure has been anathema to the Conservatives. The right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) used to talk about public expenditure as if it were a swear word. Public expenditure was not something that was embarked upon by Conservative Governments true to the faith. Goodness me, look at the Chancellor's autumn statement and consider the press releases—some extremely expensive—issued by Government Departments. The statement and those press releases boast about public expenditure. When the Government first came into office we heard a great deal about them taking their hands off industry, not intervening in industry and having nothing to do with market forces. However, the Government are intervening in market forces all over the place. One almost needs the help of a management consultant to go through all the schemes that are available from the Department of Trade and Industry.

I welcome all those changes, but that was not what the Government had in mind in 1979. Then they said that we should abolish all such schemes. This week we had a new announcement about inner-city initiatives and partnerships with local authorities and the private sector. We have been asking for that for years, but it is only in recent times that the Government have been converted. Over the years, requests have been made for urban development corporations. How long have the Government been refusing proposals for a development agency in the north and the north-west? They have not closed down the Scottish Development Agency or the Highlands and Islands Development Board. Such intervention is fine because they know that if they tried to abolish those bodies there would be an outcry and they would lose even more Scottish votes. My goodness, as ballot boxes loom large on the horizon, the Government have changed their attitude.

Sir William Clark: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in 1979, British manufacturing industry was so uncompetitive and overmanned that it was inevitable that, if we were to survive, all surplus labour had to be shed? Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, in the autumn statement of last year, the Government said—successive Conservative Governments have said the same—that when the economy was strong enough, more resources would be put into public expenditure? My right hon. Friend has been able not only to increase public expenditure on education, roads and the rest of it, but, at the same time, to reduce taxation and reduce the borrowing requirement. Surely credit should be given for that.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I cannot stand the Conservative party propaganda that is presently pouring out from Tory Back Benchers. To suggest that 20 per cent. of the manufacturing capacity of Britain was completely lost simply because firms were inefficient is unbelievable.

The hon. Member for Croydon, South should look at the history and talk to some of the managers in the manufacturing industries. The Conservatives should accept that firms went bankrupt because of the exchange

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

rate and interest rates—they were crippled by them and could not remain in business. During 1979-82, the exchange rate against the dollar was $2·40. We then went almost to parity with the dollar and now the rate is $1·60. How can businesses try to organise their planning, marketing, manufacturing or investment when there are such fluctuations in the exchange rate?

I believe that the Government should use their resources to benefit the Health Service. Recently, we have heard a number of boasts about how much the Government are spending on the Health Service. However, when the Government talk about the resources that are being spent on the Health Service, they never tell us about the demands that are placed on those resources. We believe that we must spend an extra 2 per cent. a year on the Health Service to sustain it at its present level.

We are all aware that we have an increasingly ageing population who need more care. Modern technology in the Health Service means that it is becoming more expensive to treat people. To sustain the hip replacements and other operations that are presently carried out, we must increase expenditure by 2 per cent. a year.

What is happening to the Health Service today? The Government are demanding productivity increases from the hospitals and are demanding that the health authorities pay for an element of the pay increases that the Government have agreed. They tell district health authorities that the Government will increase nurses' pay—they have said this for the past three years—and will increase Civil Service pay, but they will not give the money to pay for those increases.

I concede that the Government are giving almost all the money to meet the recently announced nurses' pay increase, but an element of that increase must be found by the Health Service from other resources. That is leading to a dire financial crisis for the North Tees health authority. A deputation from that authority will shortly meet the Minister because of that crisis. It cannot sustain the present level of health care unless the Government are prepared to make extra funds available.

The North Tees health authority has an excellent record of efficiency and productivity. There is one general hospital in Stockton—just outside my constituency—that serves the North Tees district, which covers my constituency. It has an excellent record. However, it cannot increase efficiency and productivity—that health authority has been cut to the bone. It is impossible for that authority to find the resources within its budget to meet the nurses' pay increase and the increase in civil service pay agreed by the Government. Therefore, cuts in clinical services must be made. It is a sick joke to my constituents to be told by the Chancellor that they should welcome a 2p cut in income tax. Such problems do not affect Stockton and North Tees alone; they affect district after district.

I agree that, as the Chancellor said, "as and when it is prudent" taxation should be cut. Against the background I have described, we believe that it is not prudent, nor is this the time, to make taxation cuts. If it is possible, we shall achieve our priorities without increasing taxation.

The Chancellor tried to goad me earlier about our position on tax cuts. We shall make our position absolutely clear before the general election, when our studies are complete. If we believe that we can achieve our priorities on unemployment, on the Health Service, on education and on industry without going back to the old rates of tax, we shall certainly do so. We shall publish more detail and more information, as we have done about all our Budget proposals for the last three years, than any other Opposition party, including the Conservative party when it was in opposition. We have given more details and more costings of our proposals than any other party has given.

Before the election, we shall publish full information for everybody, whether political parties or the public, to examine. We have published credible policies that could help get industry back on its feet, that could help to take care of those who have been hardest hit by the recession and above all that could start to get people back to work. Because the Government are not prepared to face up to those priorities, we shall vote against the clause.

5.30 pm

Sir Raymond Gower: While we understand much of the theme put forward by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), I think that he tends to exaggerate what can be achieved by public spending. He seemed to imply that the more the Government spend the better it is for industry, and that any money released through tax concessions is injurious to the country. I challenge this view. I do not think that Britain achieved its pre-eminence over 100 years ago by the extent of its public expenditure. It was done by the active ingenuity of industrialists and the work force over a long period of time.

The feeling of politicians in those days was that it was better to allow money to fructify in the hands of the people than to accumulate in the hands of the Government. All that the hon. Gentleman told us is at variance with that doctrine. The view of the Opposition parties is that only in the rarest circumstances are tax concessions of benefit. Psychologically, apart from any other reason, tax concessions have a splendid effect on the economy of any country.

It is not just the exact impact of tax concessions that one must study. One must examine their effect on the mood of a country. In that context, we are apt to underestimate the benefit of what the Chancellor has done. Undoubtedly, when the Government came into office there was a period of great difficulty. In the first two or three years they could not do what we like doing best. We prefer to introduce tax concessions rather than tax increases. I can well recall the days of Labour Governments from 1964 to 1970 and from 1974 to 1979. In each Budget we looked for the new imposts and the additional burdens that were being placed on industry and on individuals. How different things are today. In my right hon. Friend's Budget, and in the last two or three Budgets, we have seen what tax reductions we can identify. Surely that is much more in keeping with our record in the past and our hopes for the future.

Clause 20 is much narrower than one might think from the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South. It is limited to one tax concession, namely, on income tax. I confess that I do not take the view that it is always best to make concessions in this way. Sometimes I would prefer other tax reliefs. For example, the tax thresholds might be raised, but that has been done in previous Budgets. If we

combine the tax concessions of recent years, we see that the benefits have been widely spread. Not least to benefit have been companies, which have had tax reductions.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South referred to the difficulties of industry in his area. He implied that those difficulties all started with the Conservative Government of 1979. It was as though it was only then that we began to shed opportunities for people to be apprenticed in industry. The decline in apprenticeships spans a longer time. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the training programme should be expanded and that we should consider critically the Government's contribution to training and research in industry.

In the short term, and perhaps in the moderately long term, it is desirable to increase the return of money to producers and earners. Of course we want them to have more, but I do not think that we should set the interests of earners against those who are not working. We should try to reduce the number of unemployed. Much has been done by my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. I foresee a considerable increase in training in the coming months and years. This has to be a gradual process. It cannot be achieved immediately in the context of this tax concession.

I welcome the change in taxation. It is wrong always to describe it as a concession. It is valuable for all who are employed in industry and for industry itself. It will lead to an increase in earnings and lessen the pressure for wage and salary increases, which will be an additional benefit.

Above all, psychologically this tax change is a stimulating, attractive feature of the Administration. Coupled with the increase in production that has occurred successively for many years, it should lead us after a long period of trial to believe that the economy is on the upturn. We should not be foolishly optimistic, but, nevertheless, we can look to the future with a soberly increased confidence. I hope the hon. Gentleman will share that view.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): We are debating tax cuts. We have heard many strange and dubious claims advanced by Conservative Members. The most dubious and most suspect is the claim that tax cuts have helped and will help those on average and below average incomes. It is that issue that I wish to address first.

First, that claim can be substantiated only by a highly selective presentation of statistics. We have heard such a travesty of statistics this afternoon in the claim that the Government have made tax cuts. When they are pressed, their definition changes — the ground rules change. Instead of talking about tax cuts, they say that they are talking about income tax cuts, neatly forgetting the wider tax implications of national insurance rates and VAT, which have both increased under this Government, despite the dishonest claim by the Prime Minister immediately before the 1979 general election that she would not increase VAT. As we all know, thereafter came that swingeing increase to 15 per cent.

Secondly, in terms of overall tax, particularly for the lower paid, it is simply not true that there has been a reduction. They have borne the brunt of the much higher rates of indirect taxation, such as VAT, as well as increased national insurance contributions. In addition to the selective use of the word "tax" to limit it to income tax, there has also been selective amnesia as a convenient way of forgetting that the Government inherited a reduced starting rate of taxation of 25 per cent. from the last Labour Government. Of course, that meant that the lower paid paid less income tax than now, even after eight years of Tory Government claims to be reducing the basic rate of taxation. That is a point readily forgotten by Conservative Members when they talk about the rate of income tax.

Thirdly, Conservative Members ignore the wider implications of their policies, particularly those relating to social security benefits, which are especially relevant to the low-paid and those on below average earnings. When such people consider their disposable income, they must consider not only their income tax and national insurance. They also need to know how much income is left after their entitlement, or withdrawal of entitlement, to various means-tested benefits.

The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) — I am sorry that he is not in his place — made a remark earlier in the debate that I wish to pick up. He put forward the proposition that lower income tax would be an incentive to the low-paid to work. I wish to examine the detailed implications of the Government's policies for the low-paid. Over the past eight years their position has worsened dramatically. I shall illustrate that with a typical example of a person in low-paid employment who is paying tax and national insurance and receiving housing benefit. That benefit is widely available in the form of rate rebate for home owners and, more generally, in the form of rent and rate rebate for tenants.

In that context, there has been a serious deterioration in the position of the low-paid. A tenant receiving a rent and rate rebate, and paying tax and national insurance in 1979, would have lost 62 per cent. of any increased income. That would have been his marginal rate of taxation after losing 33 per cent. tax, 6 per cent. national insurance, and 23 per cent. through the withdrawal of his means-tested benefit. The Chief Secretary will note that I am not quoting figures for a family on the lower, 25 per cent. rate of income tax. I am quoting figures for the basic rate of 33 per cent.

By 1987 the position has changed as follows. The income tax rate has declined from 33 to 27 per cent. National insurance has risen from 6 to 9 per cent. and the loss of means-tested housing benefit has moved from 23 to 46 per cent.—it has doubled during the period. So a family or single person in that position will lose, not 62p out of every extra pound earned, but 82p. That reveals the hypocrisy of the Government's claim to be helping the low-paid. The Government have seriously increased the loss of income to someone in low-paid work who obtains a pay rise. Such a person is now losing at the fantastic rate of 82p in the pound. What greater disincentive could there be for people to seek higher paid work? That is the legacy of the present Government, but it is not the full story.

5.45 pm

Worse is to come. The Government's social security proposals, to be introduced if, by mischance, they remain in office next April, will mean that the rate of withdrawal of means-tested benefits will increase more steeply. As from next April, a person receiving housing benefit and paying tax and national insurance will lose no less than 87p out of any extra money that he earns. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of people in low-paid work, to whom the Government's policies have meant, not cuts in taxation, but swingeing increases in the rate at which

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

they lose the extra pay that they earn — hardly an incentive to encourage the low-paid to work; on the contrary, a steeper withdrawal of benefit.

What a contrast that presents to the treatment of the wealthiest 5 or 10 per cent. of the population, who have done very well indeed out of the selective tax cuts that the Government have made. For them, a rate of taxation of 87p in the £ would have been described, in the Chancellor's earlier felicitous phrase, as penal. The Government regard such taxation as wrong and as a disincentive to the richest people in the country to stay in Britain and work. Yet the Government who take that line with the richest are happy to apply that penal rate of taxation to the poorest people in employment — not the poorest in society, but the poorest in employment. That reveals the hypocrisy behind the Government's stance on tax cuts.

The Government's policy is grossly unfair, but it is not only its unfairness that leads us to oppose the proposed cut in the standard rate of income tax that is incorporated in the Bill. We do so, as other speakers have said, because of the waste of opportunity that it represents. It is a wasted chance to use the £2·5 billion that is involved to help to revive the country's economy. The Budget has failed lamentably to tackle Britain's key problems. It has failed, as other speakers have made clear, to remedy the continuing scandal of unemployment. Greater priority should have been given to measures to reduce unemployment dramatically. It is not enough to fiddle the figures in the hope that they will fall below 3 million some time later this year. We need concrete measures that are designed to get people back to work of the kind that the Labour party is advocating in its policy to put 1 million people back in employment in the next two years.

We have witnessed the neglect of the Health Service and the tragedy that has beset one of Britain's most important and best loved institutions in recent years as a result of Government policies. It has affected my constituency, too. The Health Service has been denuded of funds, the staff have become increasingly demoralised and hospitals have been threatened with closure. Three hospitals serve my constituency, one of which, the West London hospital, which has a fine reputation for dealing with maternity cases, has been under threat of closure for the past nine months. The threat has been postponed only by a temporary additional injection of finance to enable the decision to be postponed, because it would be electorally embarrassing to take it immediately before a general election.

Charing Cross hospital is short of 150 nurses because they cannot afford to find accommodation and live in central London. I spoke to them about the need for additional pay. I am pleased that the Government have agreed to implement the pay review body's recommendations immediately this year—would that they had done so in previous years when there was no election on the horizon, and would that they had agreed then to implement the recommendations promptly and in full from the date on which they should have applied. At least this year they have done so, but that is not by any means sufficient.

Last week a nurse in my constituency said to me, "I cannot afford to continue in the profession. One of my friends who also qualified recently has left the job and become a receptionist to a solicitor. Now she is paid more than twice as much as I am." In areas such as Fulham, where there are acute housing problems, it is hardly surprising that the Health Service is bleeding to death, because key staff are leaving and wards are being closed. That is happening in our key public services.

Housing, which we debated yesterday, is a further factor. Government policy makes financial nonsense. They have cut expenditure on housing and are not building the new houses that are needed. The DHSS is spending more money than would be necessary to build new houses on subsidising private landlords who are exploiting the housing shortage by offering squalid bed-and-breakfast accommodation at an extortionate cost to homeless families who should be housed. That is only one consequence of the Government's tragic failure to invest money in homes for the needy. The Government are pouring money down the drain on absurd and ineffective subsidies rather than investing it in homes that are needed. That is a further damning comment on the Government's failure.

The Government's record on pensioners is no better. Last year pensioners were given a 40p increase in their pension, which they rightly condemned universally as an insult. This year the Government have felt more generous and have offered an 80p increase. Most of my pensioners know that that is just as insulting and demeaning as last year's increase. The Government's priorities are wrong. They can afford policies that give large sums in tax concessions to the wealthy, yet they cannot afford to give an increase of more than 80p to pensioners. Our pensioners receive the lowest level of pension of any country in western Europe, except for Greece. What a damning comment on the legacy of the Government.

The Government's policies have failed across the board and investment is needed in many areas, but has not been forthcoming. In the Budget the Government have chosen to use their money in a way that fails to tackle our real problems and needs. For that reason, we reject the 2p cut in income tax. It is not the right decision or priority, it does not concentrate resources where they are most needed and it is not right for Britain. Therefore, we shall vote against it.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) began his speech by saying that this was a debate on income tax. He then diverted to housing benefit—a subject on which I know he is an authority—the Health Service and pensioners. He was reluctant to talk about income tax.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the lower rate of income tax that existed before 1979. It was a rate of 25 per cent. which applied only to a small number of people in a fairly narrow income band. Perhaps he is reluctant to talk about income tax because, if the Committee approves this clause, as I hope it will, a rate of tax of only 27p in the pound will apply, not only to a narrow income band of people on well below average earnings, but to everyone who earns up to £17,900 a year, which is well over one and a half times national average earnings.

If the Government are re-elected, as I am sure they will be, no one can be in any doubt that it will not be long before we have a basic rate of income tax of 25 per cent. for everyone earning up to one and a half times and perhaps even twice national average earnings, as the Labour Government had, but only for a small group of people who were earning well below national average

earnings. Therefore, perhaps it is not surprising that the hon. Gentleman did not wish to address income tax in great depth.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to national insurance contributions. I appreciate that he has not been in the House for long—indeed, for an even shorter period than me—so perhaps he does not recall that in 1985 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced substantially reduced employee and employer national insurapce contributions for people on below average wages. The starting rate of employee national insurance contributions, with which we are most concerned here, has been cut to 5 per cent. by the Government.

Mr. Raynsford: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that, when I compared the 1979 and present levels of income tax, I deliberately chose not to use as my example the 25p lower rate band? I simply made the point that that rate had applied and that Conservative Members were forgetful about it. For comparable reasons, I did not use the starting point for the lower rate of national insurance contributions because it, too, applies only at the bottom end of the income scale. For fairness, I chose the standard rate of income tax, not the lowest rate that applied in 1979 and the national insurance rate which applied to the overwhelming majority of people in paid employment—9 per cent.

Mr. Yeo: I suspect that the electorate will also be forgetful when everyone earning up to one and a half times national average earnings is enjoying a rate of tax of 25 per cent. Not many people will recall that, under a Labour Government, a small group enjoyed that rate of income tax. People on average earnings, about whom the hon. Gentleman said he was concerned, have the prospect of paying less income tax now and in the future than they paid before 1979.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) also began by saying that the debate was about income tax cuts, but he spent about 25 minutes on all the usual SDP sob stories. We had a great deal about manufacturing industry, several minutes on the National Health Service and several minutes on education and training, but without any mention of the policies of the president of the SDP. Finally, he found time to mention income tax. He could not answer my right hon. Friend's question about the SDP's position on income tax cuts, presumably because there is still confusion within the SDP about whether income tax should be higher or lower. If the hon. Gentleman were present, I would offer him a further opportunity to clarify that.

The hon. Gentleman explained that his studies were not yet complete. No doubt he has left the Chamber to rush off and join his colleagues in their work on ascertaining whether it is prudent to be in favour of higher or lower income tax. Indeed, it is rather a touching picture. One can imagine them closeted in a room, perhaps in Cowley street, with towels around their heads, sweating it out and trying to work out their policy on this issue, possibly assisted by a few woolly-headed academic economists.

I hope that the leader of the SDP has not been aware that that work is not complete, because only about four weeks ago he was predicting that the general election would be on 7 May. Where would we be now if, halfway through the general election campaign, the SDP were still telling us that its studies were not complete and it could not tell the country whether it wanted higher or lower income tax?

The hon. Member for Stockton, South seemed upset that, over the past four years, Government policy had not matched up to what he thought Conservative party rhetoric had been before 1983. He seemed to be trying to fight the 1983 general election all over again. If he does that, we can undoubtedly look forward to a similar result. Again, if he were present, I would ask him whether he had any criticism of Government policy since 1983, because presumably that is the period on which the electorate will shortly be asked for its verdict.

The hon. Gentleman said that he would favour income tax cuts when they were prudent. Unemployment is falling, interest rates are falling, the PSBR is falling——

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The Government are falling.

Mr. Yeo: —output is rising, productivity is rising and the pound is rising. The background does not look too bad to me. I wonder what else the hon. Member for Stockton, South would like to have before he could consider that the circumstances made it prudent to permit tax cuts.

At the start of our debate, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) apologised for the absence of his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). We have still had no explanation of where his right hon. Friend is, but perhaps that will be vouchsafed before the end of the debate. The apology raised my hopes a little, because I have listened to too many economic debates here in which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has opened for the Opposition; and I thought that an hon. Member as widely respected as the hon. Member for Dagenham would perhaps offer the House something a little more worthy of the occasion.

6 pm

I was very disappointed by the hon. Member's speech, which was unworthy of so intelligent a man. The voice was certainly the voice of the hon. Member for Dagenham, but the words sounded to me rather like the words of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. *[Interruption.]* There will be plenty of time before the general election for the hon. Member for Dagenham to decide on his position and see whether he wishes to stay in the same party as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. No doubt the hon. Member for Fulham will have been able to think about that too, as will the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) may also wish to make his position clear after the election—if he is still a Member of the House.

No amount of evasion or smearing will disguise from the voters the Labour commitment to higher taxation—certainly to higher levels of income tax, and probably to higher levels of other taxes as well. The Labour party cannot disguise from the voters that the higher taxes that it would have to propose would undermine incentives for workers at every level of pay.

One point which has so far largely escaped the attention of those who have spoken is that the amount of resources used in tax cuts this year is very much less than the amount of resources used in the autumn statement to increase public spending last year. The Government's economic decisions over the past year have focused on how to spend the substantially increased resources which the success of

[Mr. Yeo]

their management of the economy has generated. With the economy growing steadily for the fifth or sixth year in succession and with tax revenues rising very rapidly, partly as a result of the additional incentives offered by low tax rates, the Government have been faced with this agreeable choice of whether to increase public spending or cut taxation or do both.

It is in very sharp contrast to the situation ten years ago, when the Labour party was in power and was being propped up by the Liberal party, and when the choice was always whether to cut spending or increase taxation or, if it could invent them, what totally new taxes to impose. We have gone to the opposite extreme: the debate today is about whether we increase spending or cut taxation, and in the past year we have managed to do both. But we have used twice as much money to increase public spending —an almost £5 billion increase in public spending last autumn—as we have used to reduce taxation; and, at the same time, there has been a reduction in the public sector borrowing requirement, a reduction of an amount which again is greater than the cost of the tax cut that we are now debating.

So when it comes to sharing out the resources created by our success in expanding the economy, the lion's share will go to improving the quality and standard of our public services through increased public expenditure. And all that is quite apart from the excellent work done by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in making sure that we get better value for money from the spending that this Government have maintained.

All this — the combination of lower taxes, higher spending and lower borrowing requirement—is itself a very remarkable achievement, given the economic background against which it occurs. If we had listened to Opposition Members 18 months ago, in August 1985, we would have heard them say rather grudgingly that such economic success as we had achieved then was almost entirely due to the income from North sea oil. Our economy was said to be propped up by these North sea oil revenues. But what happened to those revenues after the autumn of 1985? They were reduced by about 50 per cent., with the collapse in the price of oil. One would have expected, if the Opposition assessment of our economic position at the end of 1985 had been accurate, some appalling crisis to hit our economy—a total collapse in sterling, a massive rise in interest rates, leading to huge cuts in public spending. Yet none of that has happened, and we have gone on cutting taxation and increasing spending. The pound is steady—indeed, strong. As a result of that, and of lower public sector borrowing, we are seeing substantial reductions in interest rates.

The income tax cuts are a continuation of a policy which has been followed by this Government steadily since 1979—that of reducing the rate of income tax and also of increasing substantially in real terms the threshold at which the basic rate becomes payable. That is another important aspect of this year's Finance Bill, which rather gives the lie to the criticism of the hon. Member for Fulham, when we see that there is no increase in the thresholds at which the higher rates become payable but that the basic rate threshold has been increased in line with the retail price index.

That comes on top of an increase in real terms, during the life of this Government, of the basic rate threshold of more than 20 per cent. This whole pattern of income tax cuts has been a recognition of the vital importance of incentives — incentives which are now recognised as necessary at all levels of income. This is important at the lower end, because there is no doubt that a married man with two children who is earning perhaps two thirds of average earnings—£120 or £130 a week—is not very much better off after tax and other stoppages at the end of the week than he would be if he were living entirely on social security. The gap between his take-home pay as a full-time wage earner and what he would get if he chose to live on social security is nothing like as wide as we would like it to be.

The way to overcome that problem is not to have a series of massively inflationary wage increases, which would feed through into prices and undermine the considerable gains that we have made in our competitive position. Nor is it to cut the level of social security benefits. The right way to widen the gap between what one earns in work and what one receives by way of social security is to reduce the burden of taxation and, in my view, also to reduce the burden of national insurance contributions which the lower-paid workers have to pay. As I said earlier, the Government two years ago made quite significant reductions in the rate of employees' national insurance contributions. I very much welcome those and hope that consideration will be given in the next Parliament to going further down that route.

The advantage—I am sure that it is one that will impress itself particularly on my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary — of the cuts in national insurance contributions is that they can be targeted very accurately, now that we have the categories in which people are liable to lower rates of national insurance contribution: it is an extraordinarily cost-effective form of giving tax relief.

It is also important that we go further down the route of reducing employers' national insurance contributions as well, particularly for the people in the lower-paid categories. The accuracy with which money can be targeted in these two ways is greater than anything that can be done by way of income tax. There is no doubt that the changes made in 1985 have helped to stimulate the growth in employment since then.

The fact that there are many jobs in both the service and the manufacturing sectors which command wages at slightly below national average levels, and the fact that it has become cheaper for employers to take on labour for those earning such wages and more worthwhile for individuals to accept such jobs, have undoubtedly contributed to the reduction in unemployment.

I have no doubt that we shall be able to reduce the basic rate of income tax to 25 per cent. before long; indeed, many Conservative Members hope that it will become much lower than that in the lifetime of the next Parliament and the one after that, and during all the decades of happy Conservative Governments to which we look forward. If we can reduce income tax rates sufficiently, we shall completely remove any difficulty relating to thresholds. If tax rates are down to 20 per cent. no one will be too fussed about the precise level at which he starts to pay.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: How will that affect the VAT level?

Mr. Yeo: The reduction to 20 per cent. can be achieved as a result of the steady growth in the economy.

Mr. Mitchell: That is what the Government said in 1979.

Mr. Yeo: During the present Parliament, rates have come down by 3 per cent. without any increase in VAT. We can all look forward to further cuts in the basic rate and, in due course, in the higher rates.

However, cutting the income tax rate is not the only income tax consideration; the cuts must be accompanied by tax reforms. I believe that, during the next Parliament, we should pay close attention to the ideas floated last year in the Green Paper dealing with the reform of personal taxation. Perhaps, after consultation, it will not be thought appropriate to adopt precisely the suggestions outlined in that document. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it is very desirable for us to revise the present taxation treatment of married women.

I know that an issue dear to the heart of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) is the merging of income tax and national insurance contributions. Indeed, I hope that he will touch on that subject if he catches your eye, Mr. Armstrong. I entirely share his interest in the matter. To the average wage earner, both contributions are simply stoppages in his pay packet. Few people who have grown up since the welfare state and such benefits as the National Health Service have become part of our culture, and a fixed element in our society, can distinguish between national insurance and income tax payments. I believe that substantial administrative savings could be derived from merging the two; it would also allow a more rational approach to policies and the setting of rates for both tax and national insurance. I hope that, when we proceed with further tax cuts in the next Parliament, we will at the same time give attention to taxation reforms.

6.15 pm

There is one other point that I wish to make about income tax cuts, and I am sorry to say that it is a negative point. One category of organisation in this country loses money as a result of income tax cuts. I refer to charities, which are the unique losers from a policy of switching from direct to indirect taxation. I entirely support the switch that we are making, and I applaud the substantial new tax concessions given to charities by the present Government—not least the payroll giving scheme, which came into force earlier this month. A number of organisations, including the charities VAT and tax reform group, of which I am chairman, are trying actively to promote the scheme, and we all hope that it will be a substantial success.

I welcome the remarks made by several Treasury Ministers and the efforts that they are making to publicise the scheme, for it deserves our support. I hope that before long it will be possible for hon. Members to choose a charity to which they can make donations from their payroll, provided that the Fees Office can make the necessary arrangements.

However, it must be said that a lower basic rate of income tax—we are talking only about the basic rate—reduces the income that charities receive from covenants. The present Government, in the Finance Act 1980, provided a substantial concession on covenants by cutting the period for which they must be taken out to qualify for tax relief from seven to four years. That helped many charities to promote the use of covenants as a form of charitable giving. Covenants have grown in importance, and are now a significant element in the income of many charities. Unfortunately, however, when a cut is made in the basic rate of tax, the amount of tax that the charities recover is directly reduced. As a result of this 2p cut, there will be a reduction running into seven figures for charities —a loss of some millions of pounds from covenant income.

I mention that point, because I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will keep it in mind when he considers the other requests that charities make for relief from VAT. It is not difficult to see that charities are losing income on the one side as a result of the higher rate of taxation, and on the other side are exposed to any extention of the VAT base. During the lifetime of this Parliament, one or two extensions have affected charities. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for responding this year—and even more so last year—to some of the suggestions made by the charities VAT and tax reform group for VAT concessions. That has been immensely helpful, and the dialogue that the group has had with both Ministers and Customs and Excise officials about VAT problems has also been helpful.

I urge my right hon. Friend to remember that, as he achieves these desirable reductions in the basic rate, one group—the only one in our society—loses money as a result. I hope that that loss will be recognised when charities make requests in future years for sympathetic consideration of further concessions.

Mr. Tim Smith: Surely the net effect of the various changes will be beneficial to charities. If they can get their act together on the payroll giving scheme, and can persuade employers and employees to participate, the scope for increased revenue is very substantial, and could easily outweigh the net disbenefits through reductions in the standard rate of tax.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is right. The potential effect is there. The charities VAT and tax reform group will be monitoring through its extensive membership of charities how much income is received under the payroll scheme. It will take some time to build up, but after a couple of years we shall have some impression of whether the scheme is taking off. I hope that it will. There is a good chance, but it is not certain. What is certain is that there is an immediate loss of income from covenants. But if we monitor the position and it builds up well, the charities will join the Government in celebrating. If it does not build up as well as we hope, the charities will wish to go back to the Treasury and discuss whether the scheme can be improved.

I was glad to note that the maximum amount that individuals can give under the scheme had been increased to £120 a year from the £100 that was in last year's Finance Act. I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me when I say that I moved an amendment last year to increase the amount to £120. One of my hon. Friends gave us a learned and careful argument about why it was not desirable. However, I am glad that wiser counsels have subsequently prevailed.

I strongly commend clause 20 to the House. I believe that it is the right policy for the country, and that it will be extremely popular with the voters. I am particularly grateful to Opposition Members for allowing us to have such an extended debate on what seems to me an election-winning issue.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Various hon. Members have said that this is a debate about taxation rather than about such issues as education and health. However, we should discuss how the £2·5 billion could best be used and what our constituents are saying that money should be used for. It should also be a debate about prudence. That money could be used for long-term investment in training and in the National Health Service, to ensure that people are properly treated, live longer and are comfortable, through changes in the benefits system. We should debate whether we can prudently spend money on tax cuts when we desperately need to invest in the future of this country.

We should also debate whether it is prudent to make tax cuts on the basis of short-term revenues from North sea oil, the consumer boom and privatisation. None of those factors can be sustained in the longer term, and all are mortgaging our ability to invest in the real priorities.

We could be spending that money on education. Imagine how much could be achieved in education with only a fraction of the £2·5 billion. We should be taking this opportunity to invest in adequate training for our young people.

Despite the Government's training schemes, too many of our young people possess no qualification after they have completed their training; therefore, they cannot obtain jobs. Employers say that they can make use of people who have been trained, so money should be invested in genuine rather than mock training schemes.

There should also be investment in basic educational needs—in providing books and the back-up that is so badly needed for the GCSE. Teachers should be provided with the support and the backing for which they ask, and the Government should ensure that, in areas such as mine, schools no longer have outside toilets that freeze up during the winter, with the result that children have to be sent home instead of being educated. Schools should not have to use Portakabins. In parts of Cornwall they have to be closed and the children sent home because they are dangerous in high winds. These are the alternative priorities that we must discuss.

As for the infrastructure, imagine what a difference it would make if the roads were built that manufacturing industry says it needs if it is to compete effectively. And how much more of a difference it would make than an extra £1 or £2 in the pocket each week if people had a sewerage system that worked. Is it genuinely prudent not to invest in a sewerage system that is decaying and falling apart and that in many areas will soon be more expensive to replace than any Government can conceivably afford within a reasonable period?

There are villages in my constituency that still do not have a sewerage system. In the village of Gorran Haven there is sewage in the streets, yet South West Water does not have the money urgently to rebuild the sewerage system for that village.

The National Health Service urgently needs further investment. Everybody knows that NHS hospitals must be given the money to cope with the increasing demands on their services. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) referred to the growing needs of the NHS. We acknowledge that the Government have increased spending on the NHS, but it has not been increased sufficiently to keep pace with the growing demand from an increasingly aging population and to allow the NHS to develop its other services.

We should provide proper support for the creation of jobs that would enable this country to be more competitive. If any hon. Member denies that fact, he has only to come to my constituency. Assisted area status was removed from Truro and St. Austell, and it has led to a haemorrhaging of the manufacturing base in that area. Industry is closing down or moving out. Admittedly, the grants were only marginal but they made all the difference between success and failure.

Enterprise corporations and boards invested in manufacturing industry. The investment was marginal, but it made all the difference between success and failure.

Many jobs were created at a very low cost. With well over 3 million people still unemployed, that is a priority that we should be considering.

As for the taxation system, we should not consider simply cutting the taxes of those who are fortunate enough to pay them because they are in work. Instead, we should review the tax and benefits system. As a person's income increases, he can sometimes lose money. My constituency is a very low wage area. On average, wages are £36 a week lower than in the rest of the country. Families on the dole, with children, could obtain work and earn a living, thinking that they would benefit financially from doing so, whereas they could lose financially. It would be prudent for the future of this country if we invested in such priorities. It is not prudent to have a short-term spend for votes by putting a few pounds a week into people's pockets. It cannot be sustained in the long term.

We have been asked whether the alliance is in favour of cutting or increasing taxes. Yesterday, the Prime Minister was asked in this Chamber whether or not she would increase VAT. She said that no Government could say in advance whether or not they would have to increase taxes. Is it strange therefore that we should adopt a prudent stance too, and look at the circumstances as they are?

Of course we are not in favour of increasing taxation for taxation's sake. If it were prudent and the priorities allowed us to do so, we should cut taxation. If the Chancellor could show that the important points that I have made on education, health and benefits could be put into place without taxation having to be increased, we should welcome it and accept it. However, the Chancellor has not done that. He is cutting taxation without putting these principles into effect and without acting on these priorities. He is not investing prudently in our future. That is why we shall vote against the clause.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): The hon. Gentleman has referred to the Liberal party's taxation policy. Both sides of the House have asked the Liberal party about its tax policy for the coming year. We have laid out in the Finance Bill precisely what our taxation policy is. Will the hon. Gentleman say what precisely his party would do about tax this year?

Mr. Taylor: We shall vote against the clause in the context of the Government's announced spending plans. As for our plans, we have said clearly that, if we can fund our priorities without increasing taxation, naturally we will do so. But if we cannot, we are prepared to increase taxation because we believe that that is the priority for which the people are asking, for which this nation is crying out and which this nation needs.

6.30 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I spoke at some length on Second Reading, so it is not my intention to detain the Committee at great length in this important debate on the standard rate of tax. To some extent, Opposition Members have sought to make this debate a choice between raising the personal rate of tax and reducing it: there has been criticism of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his decision to make a substantial reduction in the basic rate of tax. That is really an artificial debate in view of the buoyancy of the revenue and the ample scope which exists for tax cuts at present. Reductions in taxation are clearly indicated by the health of the British economy, but the Committee has to recognise that we are talking about just one Budget in a series. It is more than likely that my right hon. Friend will introduce another Finance Bill within a few weeks, and certainly before the end of the summer. Therefore, the Committee ought to be taking a long view.

I want to touch on one or two subjects on which I did not go into sufficient detail on Second Reading. How much is a suitable reduction in tax? My right hon. Friend the Chancellor surprised the commentators by making a reduction of only 2p in the pound. His decision was absolutely right, because he took the view that the benefits of the buoyancy of the revenue should be offered back to the public through a reduction in the Government's programme of borrowing on capital account. The prudence of that decision was obvious.

The decision having been made that there should also be a substantial reduction in the level of personal taxation — taxation on current account — it is right that the Committee should look at the ways in which that reduction is applied in the present Budget and should also consider the ways in which further reductions in the pressure of taxation on the public may be dealt with in the future.

In this Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor chose to make a general reduction by making a reduction in the basic rate. Before he comes to his next Budget, I should like him to consider whether there are advantages in making reductions in tax selectively. Obviously, a general reduction in the basic rate is a stimulus to the economy: it simplifies the whole proceeding in the minds of the electorate. But a reduction in the basic rate of tax goes preferentially to single people, because the system we use at present of granting handsome allowances to married couples means that single people have more pounds on which their tax is levied. Therefore, when the basic rate is reduced, single people stand to gain more than people on the same income who are married, and who enjoy the benefit of allowances which exempt a substantial part of their income from taxation.

A reduction in the basic rate of income tax goes to all taxpayers, but it does not directly benefit those who are not in the tax net anyway because their income is below the threshold. I should therefore like my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to consider the possible advantages next time of applying reductions in taxation selectively. There are various ways in which selective reductions in personal taxation might be made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) dealt with the desirability of tidying up the anomalies of the national insurance system. I have campaigned for a very long time for the end of the national insurance system as it now exists, because it seems to be a ridiculous and unconvincing farce and a time-consuming waste of clerical effort.

I pointed out on Second Reading that the Committee must consider that on account of their national insurance contributions, which for most people in employment are at the rate of 9 per cent., the effective rate of tax on earned income is 36 per cent., whereas on investment income it is to be reduced to 27 per cent. There is something wrong with a tax system that gives substantial advantages to investment income and leaves the rate of tax on the people who create the wealth at a substantially higher rate.

I also draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to what I believe to be the compelling advantages of reducing higher rate tax and indeed of abolishing it altogether. In making reductions in taxation, we should have a very clear idea of the priorities. They must be to create or to improve the incentives to work for the mass of the population, to encourage people to save and to invest, and to relieve need, bearing in mind that workers on low wages with families may still be incurring hardship in spite of the general improvement in standards of living of the population which we can all see and which we all welcome.

Coming back to higher rate tax, we see the way capitalism works in the far east and in other countries where there is not this oppressive and vindictive burden on the people who contribute most to the creation of wealth. It is not sufficient to talk about the reduction in higher rate tax or to congratulate ourselves, as the Government are perfectly entitled to do, on the significant reduction which has already been made in the incidence of higher rate tax. We should declare ourselves determined to abolish this vindictive and unnecessary tax altogether.

It seems to me that, were this move to be made by a Conservative Government, everybody would gain and nobody would lose. Releasing the incentive to work and to invest of the most active elements—the people who are most able to contribute the highest degree of judgment and energy in the creation of wealth—would benefit the economy and must therefore be in the interests of the entire population. We should get rid of this inexcusable and vindictive anomaly.

One could say many things about the redistribution of income which would not be appropriate under this clause. But one ought to consider the possibility of reductions in the impact of tax through the tax allowances. The Green Paper which was floated some months ago on the subject of the taxation of husbands and wives did not arrive at a satisfactory compromise. I do not think it was workable in administrative terms and it would probably have proved costly without achieving the result that we really want—that women should be completely independent and able to stand as full citizens and not as adjuncts of their husbands, as they were in the 19th century and earlier times.

Women should be perfectly free to make their own tax declarations directly to the tax collector without having to declare what their sex or status is. If my right hon. and hon. Friends are nervous about going the whole way to that reform at once, although I think it would be an extremely popular one, why not make a beginning by allowing women to have their own completely separate investment income, unaggregated with the investment income of their husbands?

Child benefit is the amalgamation of the old family allowance and the child tax allowances which were

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

introduced into the income tax system before the end of the 18th century by William Pitt. If we increase child benefit, we are making a reduction in the effective taxation of families, but we are also extending it to the people who are not in the tax net and therefore, by definition, are at the bottom of the income scale. It must be right to give priority to families, if only because of the assistance that we would be giving to incentives. An increase in the rate of child benefit is the cheapest way to improve the incentive to work for people at the low end of the income scale. It is a matter for regret that this aspect is increasingly neglected in the arguments about future reductions in taxation.

For the electorate, the choice is plain. Do the people themselves have the priority? Do the Government consider that a reduction in taxation is important, or is it more important that we place bigger resources in the hands of the gentlemen in Whitehall? Do we continue with prudent expenditure policies, keeping down the necessary burdens on the public by restraining the tendency of Government expenditure; or do we let the bureaucrats start squandering our resources once again? I warmly endorse the Government's general policy. I shall support the vote to maintain the clause as it stands in the Bill, but I trust that my right hon. and hon. Friends will consider my points in framing their policies for the future.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: This governmental obsession with tax cuts equals incentives equals the key to economic regeneration was always one of the more curious aspects of the Government's doubtful philosophy. It was interesting to note that the Chancellor did not claim that the economic revival, on which he prides himself and which he says is the product of his policies as the greatest Chancellor since the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), was due to tax cuts. He said that it was a consequence of Government policies, of which tax cuts were a part, but even in that he was wrong. The type of tax cuts of which the clause is the final triumph —or perhaps for this Parliament, the final solution—has nothing to do with the improvement in economic activity that is occurring.

The philosophy of tax cuts equals incentives was best characterised by Galbraith, who pointed out that the philosophy really argues that the rich are not working hard enough because they do not have enough money. We all know that the poor are not working hard enough because they are overpaid and are not allowed to price themselves into jobs, so the simple solution is to transfer money from the poor to the rich and all will be well. Then incentives will flourish, the economy will blossom, and things will pick up. The solution was as daft and as simple-minded as that.

Before the 1979 election we pointed out that the promise to cut taxation, which is the centrepiece of the Government's campaign, was a distortion and misleading because the Government could not cut taxation—they had either to shift the burden from direct to indirect taxation or to cut services and Government spending in some fashion, which they were not prepared to define. Those two points remain valid in terms of the Chief Secretary's promise to cut the tax rate to 25p in the pound. Implicit in that is a statement that the Government will either cut services and public spending in a way that will be painful for the economy and the people or—I am sure that they will do this—shift the burden from direct to indirect taxation by an increase in VAT and by spreading VAT to a range of commodities that are now zero rated.

I hope that the Chief Secretary will tell us which of those alternatives will be followed if progress is maintained towards a 25p tax rate. Inevitably, it must be one or the other. I see no way in which the dilemma that we posed in 1979 and the promised tax cuts then does not apply to the Chief Secretary's promise of further tax cuts to follow in the clause.

Mr. MacGregor: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the 2p reduction in the basic rate, which we are discussing, is being achieved this year without any increase in indirect taxes?

6.45 pm

Mr. Mitchell: I shall come to what has provided the Chancellor with an opportunity to make that tax cut this year. Any family earning up to 1·5 times average earnings is paying more tax and a higher proportion of income tax than it was in the last year for which the Labour Government were responsible. There has been merely a shift to other forms of taxation rather than genuine tax cuts. That is happening even with this clause.

The Government's philosophy was fallacious. If the tax burden was too high—that was never proved—because the economy was carrying the burden of the tax required by the services, for example, health and education, which the public demanded, which are essential to an advanced industrial economy, and which are better in other countries, the solution was to expand the economy and not to interfere with the economic balance by the transfer of the burden to other forms of taxation. The Government have harmed the economy. A Government who cut their spending automatically cut their revenue, which is what the Government did.

By their policies, especially those pursued from 1979 to 1981 — the nadir of the Government's economic performance, when they inflicted incalculable harm on the economy — they effectively increased the need for taxation. Even the extra revenue from North sea oil was insufficient to prevent the burden of taxation from pressing more heavily on those on average earnings than it did in 1979. Because the Government had closed so much capacity, because they had destroyed so many jobs in manufacturing industry—1·8 million jobs, or 28 per cent. of employment in manufacturing industry—they had to pay out so much to keep those resources idle and people out of work that their economic policy was effectively self-defeating.

Taking account of the 1979 increase in VAT to 15 per cent. the average earner is paying £6·36 more a week in taxation—a higher proportion of his income—than he was under the Labour Government. The same thing is implicit in the Chancellor's commitment. This is part of the hidden agenda, which involves the increase in VAT and the widening of its range. I take it that the pressure for this change arises, in part, from the legal action which the Commissioners initiated against us, and which will be heard in September. It arises also from Lord Cockfield's brazen schemes in the European Community to end zero rating and align the rates in the Community. Implicit in that is the increase in the burden of VAT on every family.

because it will mean VAT on food. Yesterday, the Prime Minister declined to say that she said that a responsible Government could not commit themselves to not increasing VAT, yet it is interesting to note that previously she had specifically committed herself to not increasing VAT.

If the right hon. Lady could commit herself quite specifically before—she did it most notably on 12 June 1984—and say to Parliament "We shall not end zero rating on food," why can she not now commit herself in the same honest and honourable way for the Parliament that is to come? Why could she make a commitment for the 1984 Parliament, but be unable to make one in 1987 for the next Parliament? It is because there is an intention, which the Government are not prepared now to avow, to increase VAT and to shift the burden from direct taxation, which the Chief Secretary wants, to indirect taxation. That is the only way in which the Government can get their tax cuts.

The clear reason why the Chancellor is in a position to make tax cuts this year is that he has been forced to accept —he resisted it all the way—a major proposal put forward by the Labour party in 1982 to get the pound down. Although he resisted every fall with increased interest rates, the pound has come down substantially. Since the end of 1982 it has come down by between 20 and 30 per cent. At times it has come down 10 per cent. on the exchange rate estimates in last year's Budget. This has meant an increase in exports, particularly to the American market—incidentally, such exports will be threatened by the fall in the dollar—an increase in economic activity and an increase in corporation tax, which, added to the present credit boom, allows the Chancellor to cut 2p off income tax.

Like so much of the political situation at the moment, it is part of the window-dressing that is accumulating in the Government's window to lure voters. A prime element on display in the show window is 2p off tax and 2p more to follow if the Chief Secretary is still Chief Secretary after the next election. I hope that electors will look, not at the shop window with the somewhat shopsoiled and tarnished array of goodies, but at the creaking, collapsing, groaning building behind it — the building that is the British economy. I hope that the electors will ignore the window and the lights and look at the building. It has not had maintenance or investment. It is creaking, shabby, shoddy and disintegrating. It is a shop in which many rooms are not used because capacity has been closed. Far too many people live in far too inadequate conditions in the cellar —the three quarter society—that the Government have run. That is the reality behind the goods that the Government are shoving into the shop window.

As the Chancellor, in his vainglorious fashion, struts outside the shop trying to tell passers by that it is one of the most successful economies in the world, voters know differently. They can see the reality of the building, the level of unemployment, the shoddy services and the cuts that have had such a serious effect on many aspects of our lives. It points to what the Chancellor should have done with the money that has been devoted in the Budget to tax cuts.

We need to get expansion going at about double the present rate. We are running a half-cock economy. In fact, the half-cock economy is supporting a three quarter society. The fact that the economy is half cocked means that the growth rate is inadequate to bring down the level of unemployment. Even in the 1930s we could manage a growth rate that was almost double the present one. That brought unemployment down in the 1930s. At this level of growth there will be no substantial and sustained fall in unemployment. It will remain to scar the country. That is what the Chancellor should have done with the money that is being devoted to tax cuts.

The Chancellor should have used the money to stimulate investment and to use it for benign and beneficial public purposes such as housing, to expand public spending to stimulate the economy. Every computer model shows that there is a far greater return of jobs and economic stimulus from public spending and using it for investment purposes than from tax cuts.

The Chancellor could have used the money to remedy many of the deficiencies that have been allowed to emerge in the welfare support system. He should have paid it to pensioners and to beneficiaries, particularly the long-term unemployed. That is the best and most effective means of stimulating the economy. They, with no fat to live on, spend money directly and give a more immediate and prompt economic stimulus. That is exactly what the Chancellor should have done, by expanding the housing programme, public sector spending and the benefits available to those who are deprived in the shoddy society that the Government have helped to create. It is a three quarter society, running on the basis of a half-cock economy, managed by a 40 per cent. Government. It is not good enough for the country. The clause is not good enough for the Bill. We shall oppose it.

Mr. Maples: Listening to the speeches made by the hon. Members for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), one would think that the Chancellor had devoted all the fiscal resources at his command over the past six months to tax cuts. In fact he has not. In the autumn, he announced a nearly £5 billion increase in public expenditure. In his Budget, in which he had another £5.5 billion, £3 billion came off the PSBR, which has led directly to the lower interest rates that we now enjoy. The sum of £2·5 billion went to tax cuts. So £2·5 billion out of £10·5 billion was devoted to that purpose.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to devote what he has given to income tax cuts to cutting the basic rate. The argument about the basic rate and thresholds has now been resolved quite definitely. In the incentives argument, tax on the marginal pound is important. In the context of the poverty trap, the proposed changes in social security arrangements on which payments will be based after tax income obviously make the tax rate irrelevant.

My right hon. Friend has made the right decision to cut the basic rate of tax. Perhaps the only argument against it is that raising the threshold will benefit the lower paid more. That is undoubtedly true. The difference is fairly marginal. The best way in which to benefit and help the lower paid is to reduce the employee's national insurance contribution to a lower level. That can be done inexpensively and targeted at a particular group. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend considered that he was not able to do that. I hope that if he continues the policy of cutting the basic rate of tax he will raise the threshold on the employee's national insurance contributions to help the low paid.

One of the canards that has to be nailed finally is that lower tax rates lead to lower tax revenue. They do not. The

[Mr. Maples]

argument about higher rates of tax and what happens to the higher paid is definitely answered by what happened to the yield from higher rate tax. Over the past eight years, it has risen by 40 per cent. in real terms. That was during a period when tax rates have been cut. That seems to bear out what we have been arguing all along: that up to a point — obviously, only up to a point — cuts in tax rates increase yield. In the case of higher rate tax, over the period when the top rate has been cut from 83 per cent. to 60 per cent., the yield rose 40 per cent. in real terms. In cash terms, it has risen from £800 million to £2·2 billion. Adjusted for inflation, that is 40 per cent. That seems to be a fairly definitive exposition of the argument that lowering rates will increase yield.

It is interesting also to note that those who pay high rates of tax are contributing not only more in real terms but a higher percentage of income tax yield than they were eight years ago. In fact, the percentage has gone up from 4·3 per cent. to 5·7 per cent. as the yield from higher rate tax. The share of income tax paid by the top 5 and 10 per cent. of income tax payers has also risen. Cutting tax rates benefits not only the rich; it benefits everybody by generating more tax revenue.

The other point about higher rate tax that must be noted is that not many people pay the higher rate. They do not have a great deal of income in excess of that rate. There are about 190,000 higher rate taxpayers. In answer to a parliamentary question, the Treasury said that the total income in excess of £30,000 a year for those people is £3·5 billion. In order to raise the £3·5 billion that the Opposition are talking about raising from the higher paid they will have to take every pound in excess of £30,000 a year. Opposition Members nod their heads. It is a fact. It is the answer to a parliamentary question. If they want to raise £3·5 billion, they will have to tax at 100 per cent. every pound of earnings in excess of £30,000 a year. I suggest that that is a policy of pure envy. It contains no economic sense and makes no sense in terms of tax yields.

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman has made the same mistake that I criticised earlier when other Conservative Members spoke. He is confusing the total yield from taxation with income tax alone. Our recovery of £3·5 billion will not come solely from income tax. Like his colleagues, the hon. Gentleman has clearly failed to grasp that point.

7 pm

Mr. Maples: From the speeches made by Opposition Members, I understood that they intended to recoup — as they put it — the £3·5 billion that has been given away in tax cuts to the rich. Tax cuts in favour of the rich — as opposed to cuts for everyone — can only be argued in the context of income tax. My point is that there is very little income in excess of £30,000 a year to be taxed.

I also want to consider the argument that people are worse off and that taxation has risen. It is statistically true that tax as a percentage of GDP has risen. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor explained in his speech, that happened mainly in the first two years, from 1979 to 1981; but it has not happened since. Most citizens are more interested to know what has happened to their real disposable income — their take-home pay. In real terms, for someone on half average earnings, tax has risen from £87 to £100; for someone on three quarters of average earnings, it has risen from £115 to £134; and for someone on average earnings, it has risen from £142 to £166. Those taxes more than cover the increase in VAT. The truth is that almost everybody — whether they are earning half, three quarters, average or twice average earnings — have a greater disposable income now than eight years ago by a considerable amount, and they know it.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Proportionately.

Mr. Maples: No, in real terms. In real terms, the take-home pay of people on half, three quarters or average earnings has risen substantially. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby tables hundreds of parliamentary questions. He should read the answers to one or two other questions and he might find more information.

Mr. Mitchell: I understand the answers, which is more than the hon. Gentleman does.

Mr. Maples: If we consider the matter in percentage terms, the real disposable income for someone on average earnings has risen by 2·2 per cent. a year over the past eight years. That is the real test of what has been happening in the economy.

I asked the hon. Member for Dagenham what the consequences of the previous Labour Government's tax rates would be if they were indexed to the present day. He declined to answer. I was not surprised, because the answer is rather unattractive. However, as he declined to answer, I thought that I would do the arithmetic. The answer to my question is the best guide to what a Labour Government would do with income tax. The Opposition declined to answer my question.

Mr. Gould: What about VAT?

Mr. Maples: The hon. Member for Dagenham may not have noticed, but an election is coming. Our tax policy is perfectly clear. However, the electorate are not at all clear about Labour party tax policies.

Mr. Raynsford: Talk about VAT.

Mr. Maples: I am talking about income tax. A reasonably good guide to the Labour party's tax policy might be its policy in 1978-79. If we index the tax bands and the married man's threshold — or the married man's allowance, as it was in 1978-79 — that allowance would now be £3,245.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: What about oil?

Mr. Maples: The hon. Member for Great Grimsby should listen for a minute. He does an awful lot of talking.

Under the present Government the married man's threshold is £3,795 — an increase of £550. If we index the rate bands, the story is the same. I have calculated the income tax payable on various incomes under the Labour Government's tax rates in 1978-79 indexed to today and compared those to the present rates. Someone earning £5,000 is now paying £325 in income tax. He would have been paying £438 — £113 more — under the Labour Government's rates. Someone earning £7,500, who is paying £1,000, would have been——

Mr. Raynsford: Tell us about VAT.

Mr. Maples: I am talking about income tax. I wish that the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) would listen for a moment.

Someone earning £7,500 a year, who is paying £1,000 in income tax, would have been paying £1,250 under Labour's rates. Someone earning £10,000 — which is about average male earnings—would be paying £2,075. He is now paying £1,675. That is a difference of £400 a year, and that is close to the figure that I suggested to the hon. Member for Dagenham in my intervention earlier.

It is perfectly clear, from any way in which we consider the matter, that under a Labour Government everyone would pay more income tax. The best guide to that claim is to be found in the rates that applied when Labour was last in office. When we index those rates, we find that everyone would pay more tax.

I am delighted to support the clause. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made the right decision to cut the basic rate. When the Government are returned, I look forward to seeing the basic rate cut to 25 per cent.—and I hope in due course to see it cut even more. From the way in which Opposition Members have spoken and intend to vote, it is clear that the Labour, Liberal and Social Democrat parties are the parties of higher income tax. The Conservative party is the party of lower income tax. The interesting point is that the cut has been made at the same time as public expenditure has been increased. That may appear to be a paradox for Opposition Members, but it is the enviable consequence of a well managed economy.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): This debate goes to the heart of the differences between the main parties. The Government want tax cuts, and the Opposition say that the money available should be spent on a range of targeted public expenditure measures which we claim will improve public services and reduce unemployment.

Before dealing with that point I want to correct an assertion by the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about value added tax. The Chancellor claimed that the Government's position on VAT, and especially on extending VAT to food and other materials, had not changed. I want to show why that claim cannot be sustained and that the Government's position has changed.

Three years ago, when we were approaching the Euro elections, in June 1984, the Prime Minister gave a categorical assurance in the House that there would be no VAT on food. She made that assertion in terms that admitted of absolutely no qualification. She replied to a question from one of her hon. Friends and said that the Government had no intention of extending VAT to food. That statement was made without qualification or hedging words.

Much has happened since then. Principally, moves are afoot in the EEC for what is called the harmonisation of internal tax rates. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham put the case for the Government's frontdoor imposition of VAT. I want to put the case for the Government's backdoor imposition of VAT through the EEC.

After Lord Cockfield was appointed an article appeared in the *Financial Times* which stated unequivocally that it was Lord Cockfield's belief that VAT rates must be harmonised within the European Community. In that article, on 25 June 1986, the *Financial Times* correspondent stated that the issue that was

"probably closest to Lord Cockfield's heart"

was

"The need for bringing indirect tax rates broadly into line."

The appointment of Lord Cockfield was followed by a document issued by the European Commission. In unequivocal terms that document stated:

"Food products, subject to zero-rate VAT in Ireland and the United Kingdom, present a particular problem which should be tackled."

That statement appeared in the document entitled, "Towards a Europe without Frontiers: The approximation of European tax systems", which was issued in May 1986.

That was followed by a letter from Lord Cockfield to the President of the EEC in May 1986, which was published as part of a consultative document by the EEC. In that letter Lord Cockfield said that it was likely that the Council would resume the examination of proposals already before it on the harmonisation of excise duty structures. That was followed by another document from the EEC, published on 20 January 1987, which set out a rolling programme for tax harmonisation within the EEC, which included harmonisation of VAT. Studies are still continuing within the EEC on harmonisation.

Our attention was caught by an article in the *Daily Telegraph* on 31 March 1987. The article did not appear in *Labour Weekly*, the *Morning Star* or the *Daily Mirror*. It appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*. The article was headlined:

"VAT threat to child clothes food and fuel."

In that article, the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Brussels stated:

"Books, magazines, fuel, children's clothes and all food sold in Britain would become liable to VAT if proposals to be presented shortly by the Common Market Commission are approved by the 12 EEC governments."

The Prime Minister followed that by a letter to Alf Lomas, a Member of the European Parliament, in which she said that the Government had not so far been convinced that the harmonisation proposal should proceed. Yesterday, when the Prime Minister was asked a question about VAT, she gave a very different answer from the one that she gave in June 1984. *[Interuption.]* This is relevant to the point that the Chancellor made. If the Chancellor is entitled to make points about VAT scares put about by Labour, we are entitled to answer those points.

The Prime Minister did not say yesterday what she said in June 1984, that the Government have no intention of putting VAT on food. The right hon. Lady said:

"There is no way in which a Government of any political colour can say that they will never increase either value added tax or income tax."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1987; Vol. 115, c. 158.]

That is a much more qualified statement than the statement made in June 1984. The dodging by the Prime Minister yesterday and the Chancellor today entitles us as a party to keep raising the issue of VAT until we get the firm assurance that the Government will exercise their veto on any VAT proposals that come from the EEC. Until we get that assurance, we will continue to press the Government on the VAT issue.

The clause raises the issue of priorities. The Government have said that because of the priorities facing the country they should, through income tax cuts, put £3 per week into the pocket of the person on average earnings. We say that that is the wrong priority. If that money is available to spend, why not spend it to provide better education, hospitals, transport and other services? The issue is not how much is being spent here and there;

[Mr. Tony Blair]

it is how much should be spent to provide the types of services that people want. I have found, not just in my constituency, but in other constituencies, that people understand the language of priorities and that it is better for their long-term future to spend this money to build up and safeguard their long-term interests.

We were told by the alliance Member, in an interesting series of interventions, that they could not be sure exactly what their policy on tax cuts would be. It is time that we got some straight answers to the questions that we have been putting to the alliance about its income tax policy. The Government have made their position clear and the official Opposition have made their position clear. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) said that the alliance would make clear before the general election campaign exactly where they stand on reversing, or not reversing, tax cuts. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) adopted a different position and said that the alliance would look at the position when it got into power. That is the hedging and dodging that we have come to know from the alliance.

We know that the position in the four or five weeks run up to the general election will not be materially different from what it is now, so we are entitled to have the campaign issues put fairly and squarely before the British people. We are entitled to know where the alliance stands. Until it makes it clear where it stands, it does not deserve to be treated with credibility.

We had the usual eulogy for the economy from the Chancellor. He took a side swipe — I thought rather unfairly—at the excellent Treasury study on the effect of taxation incentives on employment.

Mr. Lawson: Has the hon. Gentleman read it?

Mr. Blair: I have read it. It is wrong of the right hon. Gentleman to commission a report and then dismiss it simply because he does not like the findings. Perhaps the professor who wrote the report has been consigned to the same status as the bishops in Conservative propaganda, but I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would treat him with a little more circumspection.

The Chancellor, in his analysis of the economy, refused to deal with the point that he once raised in a speech about the City, that is, the short term-ism of Government economic policy. The Government's Red Book, which was published at the same time as the Budget, shows the underlying danger to the economy from the consumer boom getting out of control and causing high interest rates, which are still high even after the cuts yesterday. The Chancellor felt that he had to cut borrowing to deal with the consumer boom, because at the same time he cut taxes. The worst thing that we can do, when we have a consumer boom and high interest rates, is to cut taxes and fuel the consumer boom to a greater extent.

7.15 pm

The Chancellor talked about the real economy and output. I asked the House of Commons Library to give me the output figures for all EEC countries over the seven years of the Government's term of office. I assume that we are entitled to talk about the Goverment as if they were in power from 1979 to 1981. The table, which compares Britain's record with the records of other EEC countries from 1979 to 1986, shows a staggering picture of our relative failure. All the other EEC countries, except France, which shows a 1 per cent. fall in output over the seven years, show an increase in manufacturing output. Britain is at the bottom of the table by miles, with a fall of almost 7 per cent. in that period. The countries that have overtaken us are not just Germany or Italy. The Netherlands increased its manufacturing output by 12 per cent.; Luxembourg increased its output by 22 per cent.; Portugal increased its output by almost 37 per cent.; and Ireland increased its output by almost 33 per cent. That shows how far we have been relegated down the manufacturing output table.

The Chancellor talked about how well the Government are doing with new industries. We should look at the figures on the new technology industries, not on the traditional industries, to see how well we are doing there. Almost all those new industries are in deficit. The Government have failed, not just to save traditional industries, but to create new industries.

The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) referred to the textile industry. The textile industry shows a deficit of almost £3 billion. That is the last available figure, so the notion that the Government are a Government of progress and innovation in the economy does not stand up to a moment's analysis.

Government Members have several times muttered comments from a sedentary position about the CBI trend survey, published today. I have not had the opportunity of studying it in as much detail as I should want. I am sure that it has nothing to do with the impending general election, but a similar survey was published in 1983. If one looks at the detail of that CBI trend survey, some interesting things emerge in the difficulties that the country faces. It is true that the overall picture is more optimistic, but it is interesting that optimism is most prominent in the areas of the economy in which there is a degree of depression.

The fastest-growing area of manufacturing is the chemicals and intermediate goods sector. The second is the consumer goods sector. The lowest — lowest by a long way—is the capital goods sector—electrical, mechanical, machine goods, and so on. In other words, where there is high value added to British goods, British industry is not doing as well as it should be. Where it is doing well is in the low value added sectors, which, to a large extent, is the result of the exchange rate fall last year, because it is those sectors that are most sensitive to the exchange rate.

The CBI trend survey says about capital goods that order books are shortening, that fewer than 20 per cent. are investing to increase capacity rather than simply investing to increase efficiency, and the majority, 86 per cent., say that the major constraint on expansion is shortage of sales, orders and demand. When we are looking at the real economy, we should take some of those matters into account.

The truth about the Government, which has been shown time and again throughout this and other debates on the economy, is that when it comes to choosing the high unemployment option, they are prepared to do so. That is the central difference between the two sides of the Committee. We live now in a kingdom divided along every conceivable type of line—between the poor and the rich, the north and the south, those with private health insurance and those with public health insurance, those who have shares and those who do not have shares. This is a Government who live and thrive on social division. It

is that social division that lies at the heart of the clause, and it is because we believe in healing the social divisions in Britain that we shall vote against it tonight.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was struggling today as much as his party is struggling in the country. I recognise that many of his energies are being directed elsewhere, but his material was remarkably thin.

"Remarkably thin" is also an apt description of the attendance on the Opposition Benches today. There were only three on the Opposition Front Bench and one on the Back Benches until the last few minutes—indeed the last few seconds.

Mr. Gould: The Chief Secretary must not be allowed to get away with that. There were long periods during the debate—I do not know whether he was present—when the Conservative Benches were no more heavily populated than the Opposition Benches.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been present throughout the debate, and there were a lot more Members on the Conservative Benches.

We are told, as the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has just said, that the clause is at the heart of the matter for the Opposition. We have made it clear throughout that clause 20 and what it does to income tax is extremely important for our economic policies, and is perhaps the most important part of the Budget. But it was the Opposition who wanted the debate today in order to highlight that the clause was, in their terms, at the heart of the matter. Therefore, it is extraordinary that, throughout, practically nobody has been here.

Indeed, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) had once again to pop from the Front Bench to the Back Benches to make his speech. I always find his speeches entertaining, and I always enjoy it when he does so. He is good at creating phrases, but the economic analyses and policies behind them are woefully thin. He has recently been popping from the Front Bench to the Back Benches in another sense—or perhaps not—in an alternative manifesto which we have recently had in the minority report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

The hon. Gentleman is playing a key part in the Labour party's economic policies, and he has strongly put forward his arguments today from the Back Benches, although he is now again on the Front Bench. It is interesting to look at some of the ingredients of that alternative manifesto —a return to the policies pursued by the last Labour Government between 1974 and 1976, before they had to be bailed out by the IMF; massive and inflationary expansion of the money supply; mainstream corporation tax and advance corporation tax to be raised to 52 per cent.

Those policies are the last thing that industry and commerce in general want. They are the last thing that would keep our economy competitive and bring down unemployment. We would not have had the optimistic CBI survey this week if those policies had been followed during the past few years.

Let me return to the thin attendance. All the Opposition Members who are now on the Back Benches will not have heard the Chancellor commenting on a letter that he recently received from the Leader of the Opposition. Since this was supposed to be such a keynote debate, the poor attendance is an interesting reflection. The Leader of the Opposition says to the Chancellor:

"Our campaign will be stunning."

If it is to be as stunning as the Opposition attack today, it is no wonder that Opposition Members were not here. They were clearly so stunned that they were flat on their backs elsewhere.

There is one other phrase that I want to pick out from the letter. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition gave the game away rather more than he realised when, in his letter to the Chancellor, he said:

"I need even more help from you."

I notice how the hon. Member for Dagenham kept off Labour policies today and concentrated on whether we had or had not cut taxes enough. No wonder. The Labour party's campaign might be rather more stunning if he were prepared to accept that it is our policies that are economically successful. That may well explain why he kept right off the stunning policies that we expected to hear from the Opposition today.

I was puzzled at the line that the hon. Gentleman pursued today. He was clutching at straws when he tried to make the main thrust of his attack our record on taxes and then spent much of his speech, which was well below his usual standard, on a tiny piece of academic research concerned with technical and forecasting matters. I came to the conclusion that the hon. Gentleman composed his speech today either because he is so sensitive to the fact that bringing taxes down receives a popular and economically positive response or because he is so keen to divert attention from the Labour party's tax policies.

Mr. Gould: To which piece of academic research is the right hon. Gentleman referring? Is he referring to the Brown report on incentives or the mysterious study on the extension of VAT? If it was the latter, can he tell us a little more about it? Can he tell us what the Chancellor would not tell us? What were the terms of reference of that study, what conclusions did it reach, when were those conclusions produced and what action do the Government propose to take on them?

Mr. MacGregor: The terms of reference are known. They are to examine the detailed relationships between VAT yield and consumer expenditure. The purpose is to try to improve the understanding of the relationships between expenditure and VAT and to improve forecasting. It has nothing whatever to do with the details of any policy on VAT. The results have not yet been reached and no action will follow from them.

Mr. Gould: The Chief Secretary poses us a puzzle. If the results have not yet been reached, how can he know that no action will be taken?

Mr. MacGregor: I have explained that this is a small piece of technical economic research, of a kind that is frequently undertaken. That the hon. Gentleman should believe that it has any significance shows how thin is the Opposition's attack. It is extraordinary. The hon. Gentleman asked me for the answers and he has got them. He now knows how little there is in the point that he is making—nothing.

The hon. Gentleman also gave the game away when he kept describing our fiscal policies as tax cuts. That shows that he accepts that for some years now we have been doing just that. If the best that he can do is say that we

[Mr. MacGregor]

have not done enough yet in reducing the burden of tax, I can tell him that we will, and we know that he will not. Not only will the Labour party not, but it is clear from today's debate, as from so much else that has been said, that it will put up taxes much higher than they were under the last Labour Government.

That is why I find the hon. Gentleman's attack today so extraordinary. He has tried to demonstrate that we have not yet succeeded sufficiently in bringing taxes down. That is a recognition of the policies that we are pursuing. It seemed almost by implication to suggest that we were right to say that we know perfectly well that the policies of the Labour party would substantially raise taxes. That makes the charge of the hon. Member for Dagenham extraordinary.

I shall deal with some of the hon. Gentleman's points on the tax record and make the record on income tax clear. Everyone will pay less income tax in this fiscal year than under the income tax regime of the Labour Government when they left office—the 1978-79 regime—if it had been indexed in the proper way. A married man on average earnings would pay £10·50 a week more in income tax under an indexed 1978-79 regime. Moreover, the proportion of income tax and national insurance contributions is lower for everyone compared with the indexed regime of 1978-79.

Mr. Raynsford: What about VAT?

7.30 pm

Mr. MacGregor: It is no good the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) making that ludicrous point. It is our objective to continue to get income tax down and the burden of taxes down. We know that a Labour Government would substantially raise the burden of taxation for everyone. His is a totally bogus point.

Mr. Raynsford: Perhaps the Chief Secretary will answer the specific point that I made—that a household in low-paid employment paying tax and national insurance and receiving rent and rate rebates would have lost 62p in the pound in 1979 for every pound earned. Under this Government, even after the 27p tax rate has been put into effect, the household now loses 82p in the pound and next year will lose 87p.

Mr. MacGregor: That is a good deal better than the 100 per cent. marginal tax rates that there previously were in many areas. That is a consequence of targeting benefits on the poorest. Reversing this income tax cut would make the situation worse.

The more important point is to ask what the hon. Member for Dagenham would do. He would greatly increase the burden of taxation compared with what it is now, on everyone. That is what makes such a nonsense of the position that the Labour party has been taking today.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I shall complete this point. Referring back to the indexed 1978-79 regime, a married man without children on half average earnings—about £113 a week—will pay 9·72 per cent. of his earnings in income tax in 1987-88, compared with 12·9 per cent. if the regime that we inherited had simply been indexed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) was right—what matters to individuals and their families is real take-home pay. For those on average earnings, real take-home pay will be over 21 per cent. higher in real terms in 1987-88 than in 1978-79. The real take-home pay of married men without children on average earnings fell under the last Labour Government.

The hon. Member for Fulham mentioned nurses. He heard my right hon. Friend the Chancellor say that nurses' real take-home pay had gone up 42 per cent. under the Government. Real take-home pay has been transformed compared with the performance of the Labour Government. The hon. Member for Dagenham talked about mismanagement of the economy. What better comparative example of mismanagement under the former Labour Government and successful management under this Government is there than that?

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot give way.

I want to respond briefly to the point on regressive taxation. It is interesting that the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers—which is what I imagine the Opposition had in mind when they made this change—now pay some 28 per cent. of the total income tax yield, compared with 24 per cent. in 1978-79. That underlines my hon. Friend's argument that reductions in tax encourage greater effort and often improve yield.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) said that we must look at international tax rates when we are considering the rates of tax on the higher paid. He urged the Government to do more than we have, because in this Finance Bill we have consciously directed our tax proposals at those on average earnings and all those for whom the basic rate is the marginal rate. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that when we first took office it was right to get rid of the absurdly high levels of direct taxation that the higher paid faced under the last Government.

It is a ludicrous charge for the Opposition to make that we have not succeeded enough in our tax objectives when we are committed to a basic rate of 25p and they are committed to further massive increases. However, those are only their intermediate proposals. As the hon. Member for Dagenham knows, I have itemised the recent spending pledges that Labour Front Bench spokesmen and their party conferences have made. There have been no denials on any of them; I have the list here and I have itemised pledges with the date and the person who made them. Those spending pledges would lead to a massive increase in taxation.

I want to ask the hon. Member for Dagenham a question. We have been concentrating on the basic rate of income tax. As he will know, what goes with that are the reduction in the small business corporation rate of tax, which has now come down by 15p in the pound, and the reduced rates of tax on unincorporated businesses and the self-employed by another 2p. Is he saying that he would increase the rates of taxation on those businesses by another 2p if he ever had the opportunity to introduce a Finance Bill?

Mr. Gould: We have always made it perfectly clear that the £2·5 billion which has been given away in the Budget would be recouped, not necessarily in exactly the same form, and that that money would be spent on investment rather than consumption.

Mr. MacGregor: That clearly means that the rate of tax for the unincorporated and self-employed would increase, and I am sure that the country will be interested to know that.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) said that, in a few weeks, he would tell us what the cost of the alliance programme was to be and what it would do about income tax. I do not know when the election will be, but I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) made a very fair point when he said that the leader of the SDP had firmly predicted that the election would be on 7 May. If that were the case, presumably the hon. Member for Stockton, South has already costed his proposals and decided what he will do about the rate of income tax. If not, it is clearly a case of cobbling up a policy at the last second, which does not seem to be untypical of his party.

I am told that, at a recent farming conference, the SDP spokesman was challenged as to what the alliance would do on the rating of agricultural land, and when it was pointed out by the chairman that the two parties in the alliance were saying different things, the spokesman said that that was the value of having two policies at one and the same time. He said, "We can choose which one we want at the time." That is typical of the hon. Member for Stockton, South and all that he has said today.

I have been through the lengthy document, "The Time Has Come". There is not a specific pledge in it, but there is a vague pledge of doing something nice and worthwhile for any group to which the hon. Gentleman wants to appeal. That is typical of his party and typical of what it will do in a moment. It will vote against clause 20 and at some time it will make up its mind as to what it will do. At least on this point the Labour party is much more honest and straightforward. It has said what it will do, but once again the hon. Member for Stockton, South and the alliance want to have it all ways.

Many interesting points were made by my hon. Friends to which I will not reply because the Committee wants to come to a conclusion on clause 20.

In his opening remarks, and again in his last intervention to me, the hon. Member for Dagenham got to the heart of the matter—to use the phrase used by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair)—when he talked about my right hon. Friend the Chancellor "giving away" money in tax cuts. He used that phrase twice and in doing so gave away the Labour mentality. We believe that the tax cuts are giving back to the British people money that they have earned.

I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friends in this debate, not only because they have so effectively exposed the smears of the Labour party about our record, but because they have underlined the benefit of, and reason for, our tax policy, so well epitomised in this clause. That is why I urge the Committee to support it.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:-

The Committee divided: Ayes 257, Noes 156.

Division No. 149] **[7.40 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers

Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Steel, Rt Hon David
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 20 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 23

Deduction rate for sub-contractors in construction industry

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. MacGregor: This clause deals with the deduction rate for sub-contractors, and it follows on from the debate that we have just had.

There is no automatic connection between the deduction rate and the basic rate of tax, but the two have moved in step for the past five changes of rate and there are good reasons for that. I am sure that this change will be welcomed as it follows from clause 20 and the decision that the Committee has just taken to reduce the basic rate of tax to 27p.

Mr. Blair: The Chief Secretary has correctly said that the proposed change in clause 23 simply follows the normal diminution in the rate of income tax. Therefore, as it follows as a matter of course, we take no stand upon it.

Question put and agreed to.
Clause 23 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 21

CHARGE OF CORPORATION TAX FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1987

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): This clause sets the rate of corporation tax at 35 per cent. for the 1987 financial year.

Companies have told us that advance notice of the main rate of corporation tax helps with their forward planning. Hon. Members will be aware that before 1984 it was normal to set the corporation tax rate in arrears. However, the Finance Act 1984 set the corporation tax rates for the following three financial years and we intend as far as possible to maintain the practice of setting corporation tax rates in advance. Accordingly, this clause fixes the rate of corporation tax for the financial year to 31 March 1988 at the unchanged level of 35 per cent. At 35 per cent. the rate of corporation tax is, at present, the lowest of any major industrialised country, although the United States is shortly to emulate us with a rate of 34 per cent.

The reforms introduced in 1984 are now firmly in place, and the benefits are beginning to be felt, although it will be a few more years before they fully work through. However we can already see improvements in terms of increased dynamism, profitability and the quality of business investment decisions in Britain. That is part of a continuing success story. For example, the average rate of return earned by all industrial and commercial companies has continued to grow, and in 1985, the last year for which we have figures, it was 11.9 per cent., the highest rate since 1964.

Company profits are also up. The gross trading profits of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies have risen from £30 billion in 1984 to £45 billion in 1986. Not surprisingly, there has also been an increase in corporation tax receipts, from £10.7 billion in 1985-86 to a forecast yield of £15 billion for 1987-88. This rise in corporation tax receipts is largely the result of those higher profits. As I have said, the 1984 corporation tax reforms have stimulated business and no doubt led to higher profits. I do not pretend that paying tax helps businesses, but the corporation tax reforms show that improvements to the tax system can benefit businesses without causing a loss of revenue.

This is not a short-term boom that will suddenly collapse. Reference has already been made to one of the most optimistic CBI surveys for many years. That survey, which covered very nearly 1,500 companies, responsible for almost half the United Kingdom's manufactured exports and more than half of manufacturing employment, reported further increases in optimism about the business situation rising to levels experienced only once before in the last decade. United Kingdom manufacturing firms are now winning orders at the fastest rate for many years, with exports at record levels and forecast to rise even further. Manufacturing output, already growing rapidly, is expected to grow faster still.

All this underpins and emphasises that our corporation tax reforms, which were much criticised, have been compatible with healthy industrial development. Certainly the growth in corporation tax receipts reflects the strength of commerce. The clause merely repeats that the present rate of corporation tax at 35 per cent. should be the same for the next financial year. I do not suppose that there will be much dispute about that tonight.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. Nicholas Winterton): Is it the Minister's wish that we should take clause 22 with clause 21?

Mr. Lamont: As we have started on this debate, perhaps we could take the two clauses separately if that is convenient.

8 pm

Mr. Gould: We take no particular point against clause 21 and we do not propose to divide on it. As the Minister said, it gives us an opportunity to assess three years' experience of the changes which were introduced in corporation tax in 1984. If I recall correctly, the changes were designed to discourage what the Chancellor described at the time as investment which could not be justified or artificial investment produced by a system of capital allowances which the Chancellor felt was distorting the pattern of investment.

One assumes, as a corollary of that, that the changes were also designed to encourage the use of cheap labour as a substitute for investment. I assume that that was part of the Chancellor's interest in promoting what he described in a memorable phrase as a "low-tech, no-tech" economy. Incidentally, that attitude sat uneasily with his subsequent interest in the proposition that our economic ills were the consequence of high wage rates. That also had a brief run of popularity until a reasonable amount of academic research and commentary showed that the proposition could not be sustained.

Mr. Tim Smith: Why does the hon. Gentleman refer disparagingly to cheap labour? Surely he recalls that the 100 per cent. investment allowance was the response of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), as Chancellor, to excessive rates of inflation. It was basically an inflationary allowance. When inflation came down, it made sense to bring the rates back to more sensible levels. When unemployment was high it did not make sense to have a system that encouraged investment in expensive labour.

Mr. Gould: What the hon. Gentleman says is true of stock appreciation but not of capital allowances. I have used the phrase "cheap labour" because in any international assessment that is precisely what we have. Notwithstanding the Chancellor's contention that real wages were too high, he has now abandoned that, or, if he has not abandoned it, he is not saying much about it. Again, that may be one of the detectable changes in attitude and in Government policy which owe much to the apparent imminence of a general election.

Sir Raymond Gower: Surely the chief complaint was not that wages were too high but that some wages were too high in relation to productivity. Has not that been altered by the vast improvement in productivity?

Mr. Gould: I deliberately used the term "real wages". By definition that covers the hon. Gentleman's point. Since he mentioned productivity in his intervention, I must point out that the productivity improvements of which so much is made demonstrate no improvement in trend. The improvement over the period of this Government is no better than we achieved in the 1960s and 1970s. I shall say

[Mr. Gould]

a word in a moment about the figures that have been produced and why they are perhaps less reliable than is sometimes suggested.

Let me return to the question of how effective the changes of 1984 have been in securing the objectives that the Chancellor enunciated. We were warned at the time by the Institute for Fiscal Studies that the effect of the changes would be to discourage investment. As I have said, at least in his own terms the Chancellor acknowledged that that was part of the intention of the changes. That objective has certainly been met. Investment in manufacturing rose briefly in the wake of the announcement of the changes, but that was a transitional response. It had a bunching effect to get investment in before capital allowances were phased out. Now that that has happened, manufacturing investment has fallen back to more than 20 per cent. below the level of 1979.

As a consequence of that appalling investment policy for manufacturing industry, we are again as an economy disinvesting. From 1980 to 1985 there was net disinvestment of £5·52 billion compared with positive investment of about the same sum from 1975 to 1979. In other words, we are the first major country to bring in reverse development. That is the outcome of the Government's economic policies and the true measure of their much-touted economic boom.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies also pointed out that the changes would be biased in favour of financial institutions, particularly banks, which had major investments in property and which, therefore, benefited from the cut in corporation tax but lost very little through the loss of capital allowances. The impact of the changes has been principally in respect of manufacturing industry. In that context it is also worth bearing in mind that whereas the Chancellor predicted, and indeed indicated that it was his intention, that the changes should be revenue neutral, that is not how they have turned out. I have full sympathy for the Chancellor. It must have been an extraordinarily difficult prediction to make. Nevertheless, that was his intention.

It appears that the Chancellor missed his target. It again demonstrates how little the Chancellor knows about how the economy is performing and about how much revenue he is likely to receive from corporation tax. The reason that I make the point is that a forthcoming article in *Fiscal Studies* will point out that, accepting the increased profitability, the changes have produced a £1 billion increase in revenue over what would have been the revenue take if the changes had not been made, even in the same circumstances. In other words, far from being revenue neutral, the changes have produced an extra £1 billion of revenue over and above what has been produced by the buoyancy and profitability of the corporate sector. Therefore, we have yet another indication of why the Chancellor has been inundated with revenue that he had not expected even some months ago. Again, it demonstrates how little he knows about what is happening to the economy.

The other objective of the changes, as the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) suggested in his intervention, was to boost employment. Instead of using expensive investment, the objective was to use relatively inexpensive labour. If that had been achieved, one might have said that there was a certain rationale and something to be supported in the changes. But, of course, the loss in manufacturing employment has continued unabated. There has been a 28 per cent. loss in manufacturing jobs since the Government took office.

Turning to the productivity point made by the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower), it is the continuing fall in manufacturing employment outstripping the fall in manufacturing output which has produced the misleading productivity figures of which the Government have made so much. If we were to be offered a bargain of further improvements in productivity of the type that the Government have produced, but at the price of falling manufacturing employment outstripping falling manufacturing output, I do not think that many of us would say that such productivity was worth having.

Productivity is not so favourable if one considers it in terms of output per hour rather than output per worker. Rather than sack workers, many employers have kept them on but have asked them to work longer hours. Therefore, the productivity figure is more favourable in terms of output per worker but much less favourable on the more accurate basis of output per hour.

In addition, there is the familiar argument that much of the productivity improvement has been brought about because the weaker performers have gone to the wall and have gone out of business. For all those reasons, I think that we are entitled to look askance at the claimed productivity miracle of the Government.

The changes introduced in 1984 have predictably discouraged investment, which is parlously low. It means that we are disinvesting rather than investing substantially in new capacity, as all our rivals are doing. The change has not been revenue neutral, as the Chancellor intended. Certainly it has not encouraged employment in manufacturing industry. Therefore, the conclusion we reach is that the changes, while in a sense understandable by the Government's rationale at the time, have not been helpful to industry and, indeed, have been deleterious to it in many respects.

We still need some means by which investment—particularly in manufacturing industry—can be picked up off the floor. If that does not happen, we know as a matter of certainty that we cannot go on competing in international markets against countries that are investing in their own industrial bases. If we do not invest, we are trying to compete with one hand, if not two hands, tied behind our back. So it becomes of crucial importance to our economic future to find a means of promoting the investment that we need. Clearly, the Government have no answers or ideas on that subject. The changes that they introduced in 1984 have done nothing to improve the position; they have worsened it as far as one can tell.

We need a different approach, a different macro-economic climate and specific incentives to investment. None of those appear to be in the Government's mind. The Government are guilty of the very short-termism of which the Chancellor accused the City some months ago. If we are to get the investment that we so desperately need, the economy and the country will have to wait for a Labour Government to achieve it.

Mr. Tim Smith: I do not know how the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) can say that the Government are guilty of short-termism when, in 1984, they reformed corporation tax and, for the first time, told companies what the regime would be for a three-year period ahead.

I recall the days when Chancellors of the Exchequer stood up and announced in the course of their Budget statements the rate of corporation tax for the year that had just concluded. That did not help companies that were trying to plan ahead.

I welcome the clause because it states the rate of corporation tax for the coming year, which helps companies. Secondly, it is a low rate of corporation tax —35 per cent. That will also help companies. I cannot remember the exact history of all this, but I recall that, in the early and middle 1970s, as inflation rose, there was a cash flow crisis in industry. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), then Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced stock appreciation relief. I believe that 100 per cent. capital allowances were not only an incentive to industry to invest but were necessary so that industry had the cash to replace assets that could cost 100, 200, or 300 per cent. more than they had before because of inflation. The changes that were made in 1984 were a proper response to the fact that there was no longer rampant inflation in the economy. They were not so much designed to encourage employment in manufacturing industry as to ensure that the tax system was not so distorted that decisions about whether or not it would be commercially right to invest in new machinery or use new employees were dictated by tax considerations. So the tax regime for corporation tax and for capital allowances was basically neutral as between a decision to invest or use additional labour. At a time of low inflation and high unemployment, that was the right thing to do.

Now, three years on from 1984, we find that the revenue from corporation tax has risen substantially. I believe that that is largely due to the increased profitability of British industry. The hon. Member for Dagenham tried to argue that the £1 billion figure that is to be published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies is due to the 1984 changes in the regime. However, that figure must be hypothetical, because people change their behaviour in response to tax changes. The figure can only be the institute's best estimate, and, even if it is correct, it shows that the bulk of the increase in revenue from corporation tax—corporation tax revenue was only £3 billion or £4 billion not long ago — has been due to the increased profitability of British industry.

An interesting appendix to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee's report on the Budget shows the difficulty of forecasting the yield from corporation tax. It is particularly difficult for the Revenue to forecast the yield of that tax. Another factor is that there were huge tax loss over-hangs in many industrial companies — they were making good profits but paying no corporation tax because of losses that were carried forward. Many of those have come to an end, which is another reason for the substantial increase in yield. For all those reasons, I welcome the clause.

8.15 pm

I want to refer briefly to the effect of the changes on the film industry, in which I have a constituency interest. Pinewood film studios in my constituency is a subsidiary of the Rank Organisation, which has recently had to make a large number of redundancies in response to changes in the market. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will be aware that the chief executive of the Rank Organisation wrote to him on 24 April about all this. I do not want to weary the Committee with all the figures, but it is not enough to say that the business expansion scheme will be sufficient to help the film industry. The amounts of cash involved, the long lead times and the substantial amount of risk make it a special case.

I ask my right hon. Friend to examine the letter from the Rank Organisation carefully; it sets out the arguments for some degree of special treatment for the film industry. The industry is a special case, although I know that it is not the only one. The points advanced by the chief executive, Mr. Gifford, are the substantial amount of funding required for film production and the long period between commencing production and incurring expenditure on a film and the date on which revenues start being received. There is also the fact that such revenues tend to be earned some time after initial cinema release. I hope that my right hon. Friend will give careful attention to those arguments.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I agree with the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) about the level of profitability, which I believe is welcome in business at the present time. I also agree with him about the certainty for rates of corporation tax. That proposal was welcome and has certainly been helpful to businesses.

I want to say a few words about the important subject raised by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) —the impact that the changes have had on investment. That is of fundamental importance to us all. There is a continuing debate about the relationship between the manufacturing and services sectors of the economy, and about whether the one can replace the other or is more important than the other. Surely the services and manufacturing sectors are interdependent. Each rests upon the efforts of the other. In a trading nation such as ours, services inevitably depend more on manufacturing than the other way round. Almost 100 per cent. of manufactured goods are tradeable, whereas only 20 to 25 per cent. of services are tradeable.

All the historical evidence is that those countries that have succeeded in exporting a large number of their products — the most recent example in the post-war years has been Japan—have built upon the back of their enormous manufacturing trade the service industries that go with it — banking, shipping, insurance and all the other things that we provide so well in the City of London. But one needs a strong manufacturing sector to have a healthy services sector. One of the reasons why we have such a successful services sector is that, historically, we have had a substantial amount of world trade in manufactured goods ever since the industrial revolution, Victorian times and the empire. That gave us an enormous advantage.

It is vital that we examine the impact that the changes have made on investment. I draw the Minister's attention to the latest annual report of the Equipment Leasing Association. It commissioned a report at Bath university, and has commissioned a further report on the impact of the changes on industry and investment. Many of us thought that the changes in corporation tax would lead to a considerable reduction in the leasing industry's activities, because it seemed that the leasing business was built largely on the tax structure that used to exist. However, the leasing business has continued to thrive and, indeed, is expanding. Nevertheless, the study that the Equipment Leasing Association carried out demonstrates the decline

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

in investment which has taken place recently and which is forecast to take place in future as a result of these tax changes, and I find it disturbing.

I am fairly pessimistic, but would like to think that the Government will consider whether we can use the tax system to encourage investment in some high-tech areas of the economy in a way which commands broad consensus in the House. Generally speaking, I am sceptical about tax expenditure. One does not like to distort the tax system by introducing tax allowances any more than necessary, but against that one must admit that tax breaks are a wonderful incentive to individuals and businesses. One need only look at mortgages and the insurance and pensions industry to see the impact which tax incentives can have.

It is absolutely vital to reverse the recent awful trend in high technology. Many countries have beaten us solidly; our balance of payments for information technology equipment has been growing increasingly wide and adverse and we must do something about it. The Government should consider introducing tax incentives to encourage more investment in these vital areas in future, not only for those sectors of industry, but for the many other sectors that depend on them.

Information technology is an obvious case in point. In one way or another, both the service industries and manufacturing industries will depend on it. Therefore, we must be at the forefront of that technology in terms of research and development and manufacturing. We must be able to beat the competition from Japan, America and Germany, because that is the only way we can succeed.

We may be able to encourage companies through the tax system to invest more in research and development and in capital equipment and to use and develop high technology in a way which all hon. Members want to see, and I hope that Treasury Ministers will give that some consideration.

Sir Raymond Gower: Like the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), I agree with what has been said about the advantages of having the corporation tax rate stated firmly and clearly in this clause of the Finance Bill, and with what has been said about the benefits of this low rate, which is extremely favourable in an international context.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) went a long way to disparage and discover the loopholes in British productivity. The fact is that our industries have been in decline for several decades and one must recognise that. Indeed, at one stage the decline seemed to be terminal. The decline of much of British industry dates back to the end of the last war and some of it dates back further, so this state has persisted for a long time. The difficulties of British industry were aggravated by the lateness of our entry into the Common Market which meant that we suffered many of the disadvantages, without gaining the advantages. Moreover, we faced enhanced competition from the new entrants into the industrial world—not merely Japan, but Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and so on. All that aggravated the difficulties of British industry.

It is only now that much of British industry has turned the corner and become more efficient than it was. The fact that our industry went through that difficult period has made it more efficient, but that has brought other problems. By becoming more efficient, industry has shed some of its labour, which has exacerbated our unemployment problem.

Mr. Gould: I am listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman, and I would not intervene if it were not that he was making assertions which are widely made but not based in fact. He is saying that British industry has become more competitive as a consequence of changes in productivity and manning levels. I am sorry to tell him that that is not borne out by any index of competitiveness which the Government use—and they use about half a dozen. Each of those shows that competitiveness has declined since 1979, quite apart from the fact that output has fallen.

Sir Raymond Gower: I have personal knowledge of certain companies and I have seen benefits accruing to them as they have recovered with difficulty from their position of eight or 10 years ago. It is only now that some of those companies are more efficient. One or two specialised industries, such as the textile industry, have made a great recovery, but the hon. Member for Stockton, South tended to belittle what has been a distinct recovery.

For the reasons that have already been given from both sides of the House, we can all accept this clause, and I hope that we shall do so.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Several speeches concentrated on the effects on investment of the changes made in 1984, but levels of investment have held up. We always accepted that reform might affect the investment profile, with some being brought forward to earlier years to qualify for the higher rate of capital allowances, but the DTI investment intentions survey suggests a rise of about 6 per cent. in industrial investment in 1987 and a similar increase in 1988.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) referred to the Equipment Leasing Association. Only in March it announced that 1986 had been its second best year ever, contrary to the expectations that leasing would be hard hit by the 1984 reforms.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I said that the effect of the changes on leasing had not been adverse, as had been anticipated. That is different from saying that, because leasing has increased, the amount of capital investment in industry has increased. I hope that the Minister will study the report, because it points out that the level of industrial investment will decline in future and that action needs to be taken to stop that decline.

Mr. Lamont: There are no grounds for saying that industrial investment or investment in the economy has declined. As we all know, investment in the economy is at record levels, but Opposition Members like to point out that manufacturing investment has been adversely affected.

I mention these matters because in 1983, the year before the corportion tax reforms, manufacturing investment, including leasing, was £6·8 billion, whereas in 1986 it was £9·5 billion. Therefore, there is not much evidence that the reforms have had the dramatic adverse effects that hon. Members have described.

That is the figure that we should look at, and that is the point that I would make in reply to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) when he talked about net

disinvestment—a concept that is beloved of statisticians but one about which I remain extremely sceptical because of the difficulty of measuring it. What we can look at and what we do know about is gross investment, and the figures for gross investment are those that I have given the Committee. They hardly bear out the dire predictions by hon. Members of the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South said that he did not like tax breaks but thought that we ought perhaps to consider them in this particular instance. It is a very unfamiliar stance for him to say that, while he is against something, on the whole he might just favour it a little. It is a very attractive posture and we know why it was taken, but on this occasion, the hon. Gentleman will be very pleased to know that not only have we listened to and considered what he says; we have already done what he advocates. There is already provision for short-life assets to be treated differently: expenditure on assets with a life of up to three years can be written off over the life of the asset instead of at the normal rate of 25 per cent.

8.30 pm

That was specifically introduced for the high technology sector, bearing in mind that in information technology and electronics some investment is written off at a truly astonishing rate these days. I merely draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to it to try to assure him that we had that particular problem somewhat in mind.

We also heard from the hon. Member for Dagenham the view that the tax reforms had increased incentives to invest in services, particularly the financial services, although I think that it is an argument that applies to all services rather than just to financial ones. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said, the reforms are particularly designed to bring about a situation where investment is business-driven and not tax-driven. That is the whole point of it. If this means more investment in services, so be it. I agree with the hon. Member for Stockton, South that there is not a right level of investment, either in services or in manufacturing; the important thing is that for the country as a whole the investment should be of the highest quality.

The hon. Member for Dagenham was sceptical about the revenue neutrality of the reforms. We will read with interest what the Institute of Fiscal Studies says on this. It does not automatically follow that, because the revenue is higher than predicted, it has failed to be revenue-neutral. There will have to be rather more to the argument than that, and I know that there will be. But we are not persuaded that there is yet evidence to show that it was not revenue-neutral.

The main factor that has increased the revenue from corporation tax has been the dramatic recovery in the profitability of British companies. I have quoted the rates of return in British non-North sea companies up to the levels of the 1960s. The hon. Member for Dagenham says that the fact that we did not predict that accurately shows how out of touch the Chancellor is. What it really shows is that the economy did even better than the Chancellor said it would, even better than he had expected.

The hon. Member for Dagenham kept talking about short-termism, saying that the Chancellor was running the economy in a short-term way. If ever I heard short-termism expressed, it was in the hon. Gentleman leaping to say that the changes in corporation tax were all wrong and that we ought to look at them again, in the first year in which they have operated in their new form. If that is not short-termism, I do not know what is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield raised the subject of the film industry. I was very glad that he raised it after the hon. Member for Dagenham had spoken and not before, because the hon. Member and I used to debate legislation relating to the film industry, and the changes in corporation tax were much debated — almost out of order—when we were discussing the Films Act 1985.

I will certainly look at the letter to which my hon. Friend referred. He will know that we have taken the view, very much on the grounds that he himself was arguing, that investment should be business-driven and not tax-driven, and that we could not make exceptions for particlar sectors. He will know—I think he said—that the film industry is not the only one to argue that it should be regarded as a special case. We do not say that the answer to the problems of the film industry is the business expansion scheme, not for one minute; but I hope that the changes that we have made in the business expansion scheme will be positively looked at by the industry, because we deliberately made some changes which we hoped would overcome some of the problems perceived by the film industry in making full use of the scheme. Nevertheless, I will look at the point that my hon. Friend made, and at the letter.

I am grateful also to my hon. Friend for picking up the hon. Member for Dagenham when he said that one of the purposes of the corporation tax changes had been to encourage the use of cheap labour. That was never the purpose, and I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman, who likes to represent our arguments fairly, was really parodying the argument. It was always that we ought to have neutrality in the tax system as between capital and labour — it has nothing to do with cheap labour—that companies ought to be given an incentive to employ people rather than substitute machinery for labour. That is the same philosophy as informed the changes that we made in regional development grants as well; we thought it a good thing to make them more job-related. I still think that those were good changes, and I agree with what my hon. Friend said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) took up the hon. Member for Dagenham on what he had said about productivity and the fact that it was nothing remarkable. If I undestood him—he has certainly made this point on previous occasions — the hon. Member for Dagenham was arguing that there is, somehow a difference between a negative increase in productivity — getting rid of people — and a positive increase, which is increasing output while keeping the same labour force. But I would put this to Opposition Members: if there is overmanning in industry, that position will be unsustainable. The level of overmanning that we inherited in 1979 in industries such as steel was untenable. It is a terrible thing that so many people should have had to be made redundant in the steel industry, but this has made the industry more competitive and it has made the jobs that remain in the industry much more secure. He says that there is no increase in competitiveness, but I think that he will find that view very much disputed by the steel industry itself.

Mr. Gould: I am sure that the Financial Secretary understands the point. It is simply that the rates of

[Mr. Gould]

productivity are partly produced by a statistical effect, because weaker performers have dropped out of the picture. So the average of what remains appears to rise, although the actual productivity performance of each of those people need not have improved at all. That is what underlies a productivity performance which, despite the claims made for it, is no better than trend in any case.

Mr. Lamont: Many people would dispute the hon. Member's view of that. I remember noticing in about 1980 —I speak from memory—the astonishing fact, as I saw it, that the proportion of the labour force engaged in manufacturing was actually higher in this country than in Japan, even though the contribution of manufacturing to output was much higher in Japan. It just demonstrates how unsustainable was the level of manning that we inherited in 1979. However harsh the treatment has been, it is a problem that has had to be faced. By facing up to it we have made industry more competitive and much better able to face the future. We had concealed unemployment. The more we delayed facing that, the greater the ultimate increase in unemployment would have been.

Mr. Gould: Rubbish.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman says, "Rubbish," but everyone here knows that it is true.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 21 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 22

CORPORATION TAX: SMALL COMPANIES

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Lamont: The clause reduces the rate of corporation tax for 1987 to 27 per cent. for companies whose profits do not exceed £100,000.

Since 1979 we have regularly declared the need to encourage activity in the small firms sector. We have not just paid lip service to this, we have progressively introduced a number of measures to help small businesses. Clause 22 is one of a number of measures in this year's Finance Bill that are aimed at small businesses. It reduces the rate of corporation tax on the profits of small companies from 29 to 27 per cent.

This is the latest in a series of cuts. Since we have been in office, the small companies rate of corporation tax has been cut by 15 percentage points from 42 per cent. That is a drop of over one third. This is now the fifth year in succession that we have been able to keep the rate of tax for the small company in line with the basic rate of income tax, which is also the marginal tax rate for the vast majority of unincorporated businesses. That is an important reason for aligning the two.

We believe that the reductions provide the right kind of climate for business to thrive, but that is not all that we have done for small companies. For example, we have introduced innovative schemes to help companies to raise capital for expansion — for instance, the business expansion scheme, and many of the changes that we have made on the venture capital scene.

I hope that the change, and the clause, will be acceptable to the House.

Sir Raymond Gower: This is a truly excellent change, and I feel that it should not pass without comment. Nothing can be more profitable than for us to assist the smaller companies. On the whole, the growth rate of such companies bears comparison with, and in many cases exceeds, that of larger companies. To that extent, we are investing in the right place.

I welcome the clause. It is a first-class innovation.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 22 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

To report progress and ask leave to sit again.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Value Added Tax

8.43 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move,

That the Value Added Tax (International Services) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 518), dated 25th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th March, be approved.

I think that it will be for the convenience of the House if we consider also the second motion:

That the Value Added Tax (Betting, Gaming and Lotteries) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 517), dated 25th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th March, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): If that is the wish of the House, so be it.

Mr. Brooke: The purpose of the first order is to amend the zero-rating provisions of group 9 of schedule 5 to the VAT Act 1983 in two respects. The first is a change in liability of services supplied at events such as exhibitions, where United Kingdom treatment has been at variance with the practice in the other member states of the European Community. The second is to correct a minor technical error which occurred during the process of consolidating VAT law and this relates to the VAT liability of financial services connected with the export of goods from the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom has recently accepted as correct and logical the view expressed by the European Community Commission, backed by all other member states, that exhibition services should be taxed in the country in which the event takes place. This has different consequences for United Kingdom and overseas exhibitors. I shall deal first with United Kingdom exhibitions. Hitherto, we had zero-rated supplies by United Kingdom traders to overseas firms participating at United Kingdom exhibitions, taking the line — now discredited—that such supplies were advertising services falling to be taxed in the country of the recipient. Those supplies were zero rated under item 5 or 6 of group 9 by virtue of the exception contained in note 4*(b)* and *(c)* to the group. Under that interpretation, the supplies fell to be taxed by the taxation authority in the country where the customer belonged.

The correct interpretation is that exhibition services fall to be taxed in the country where the exhibition takes place. This order, by deleting note 4*(b)* and *(c)* from group 9, ensures that supplies of exhibition services by United Kingdom traders to overseas exhibitors at United Kingdom exhibitions are excluded from zero rating, and thus become taxable in the United Kingdom at the standard rate.

The net revenue yield from the change will be minimal, because most of the overseas traders to whom tax will be charged will be able to apply to the Customs and Excise for refunds of the tax. At present, such refunds are limited under the eighth VAT directive to Community traders, but from 1 January next most non-Community traders will also become eligible under the recently adopted 13th VAT directive.

I now turn to exhibitions held overseas. When exhibition services are supplied by United Kingdom traders at exhibitions outside the United Kingdom, under the EC sixth directive they fall to be taxed in the country where the exhibition takes place, and should therefore be entirely relieved of United Kingdom tax by means of zero rating. The United Kingdom has always followed that line except for stands hired to United Kingdom companies. However, in the light of the new interpretation, there are doubts about the vires for this under United Kingdom law. The order is intended to place the matter beyond doubt by amending item 3 of group 9 to cover all services at exhibitions, conferences and meetings which are events similar in nature to those already catered for in that item.

I do not think that the House will wish me at this late hour to go into the details of the order, but I shall refer to the minor technical error that I mentioned earlier which the order corrects.

The original provisions of the Finance Act 1972, and the subsequent amendments contained in successive Finance Acts, were brought together in a consolidation exercise to form the VAT Act 1983. In the process the items of the exempt group dealing with finance were renumbered, but item 9 of group 9 of schedule 5 to the new Act, cross-referring to those items, was not amended to reflect the renumbering of the exempt group. Article 6 corrects that error.

I commend the order to the House.

I now turn to the second order. Certain changes in Northern Ireland social law have recently been implemented by regulations to permit the promotion of certain types of gaming, mainly bingo, which were previously illegal in the Province. The changes enable bingo to be promoted in broadly the same way as in the rest of the United Kingdom. So as to enable the VAT treatment of such gaming to be consistent throughout the United Kingdom, the minor changes to the relevant VAT law which this order proposes are necessary.

The VAT treatment of betting and gaming is governed by group 4 of schedule 6 to the VAT Act 1983, which exempts from VAT most forms of betting and gaming. The general principle, to which there are only minor exceptions, is that activities liable to excise duty do not bear VAT, and vice versa. Most activities which are not subject to excise duty are, therefore, expressly excluded from the exemption by virtue of the legal notes to item 1 of group 4, and these excluded activities are taxable at the standard rate. One such activity, and that with which the order is principally concerned, is the granting of a right to take part in a game in respect of which a charge may be made by virtue of regulations under section 14 of the Gaming Act 1968. Broadly speaking, this concerns bingo and other gaming conducted on bingo club premises for which a charge is made for participation.

The relevant VAT provision, note (1)*(b)* to item 1 of group 4, is tied to a provision of the Gaming Act 1968. However, the Gaming Act does not extend to Northern Ireland, where betting and gaming have traditionally been subject to separate social legislation. Thus, note (1)*(b)* to item 1 of group 4, as at present drafted, has no effect in Northern Ireland. Hitherto, this has not mattered because the types of game covered by the note were illegal in the Province and it was not thought necessary or desirable to provide for their standard rating when group 4 was originally enacted.

As I have indicated, the position has now changed, with the promotion of bingo having been made legal in Northern Ireland with effect from 16 February 1987. Bingo is thereafter likely to become firmly established in

[Mr. Brooke]

the Province, and, in order that the VAT treatment of such activities should be consistent with that in Great Britain, note (1)*(b)* to group 4 needs to be widened.

The VAT revenue yield can only be speculative at the moment, since it will depend on the extent to which bingo promoters take advantage of the new social law provisions, but it is unlikely to be significant. It is not expected to exceed £1 million in a full year and will clearly fall short of this figure in the current financial year.

The interval between the implementation date of this order and the slightly earlier implementation date of the relevant Northern Ireland social law provisions has negligible significance in VAT revenue terms since it reflects the time needed by prospective bingo promoters to obtain the necessary authority to conduct bingo operations. In practice, therefore, legal bingo operations are not expected to take place much before the operative date of this order.

In conclusion, I should add that a parallel change has already been made in respect of bingo duty in last year's Finance Act.

I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Value Added Tax (International Services) Order 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 518), dated 25th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th March, be approved.

Value Added Tax

Resolved,

That the Value Added Tax (Betting, Gaming and Lotteries) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 517), dated 25th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BROADS (*re-committed*) BILL

Ordered,

That the Order for Committee be discharged and that the Bill, as amended in the Select Committee, be re-committed to a Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

British-made Goods

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

8.51 pm

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): I am grateful for the chance to hold this debate on a major campaign to persuade the British to buy British, and I am very glad that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, who has done so much for British trade, is here to reply to the debate.

No war is a good war, and we are fortunate to be living in an age when wars are no longer seen as solutions, so it is with considerable concern that we should regard the recent rampant enthusiam for a "lovely little trade war". In the past few weeks, the ugly face of protectionism has made a dramatic come-back. Even as I speak, there is legislation in America to tax certain imports.

Some Members of this House have repeatedly called for the protection of British industry as a means of rebuilding British manufacturing, proposing that we copy the Japanese. Let me establish at the beginning that I believe that mindless chauvinism is futile. If we as a country retreat into protectionism, we are dooming ourselves to a market of ready-made, inferior products. We cannot copy the Japanese, simply because we are not Japanese. It is for us, as a trading nation, to insist on fair trade. I believe that protectionism is a perilous form of patriotism, just because it is so disastrous as an economic strategy.

One of the fruits of living in a free society is the freedom to choose what we buy and to buy what we choose. It also turns out to be one of the best ways of creating harmony between nations. The informal relationship of trade between nations is, though not foolproof, the best insurance policy for peace that man has yet devised. How, therefore, have we reached this pitch of trade war fever where there is more enthusiasm for trading punches than for trading nations? It is because Britain, like America, went too far.

We moved from being the kind of country that Adam Smith described in "The Wealth of Nations"—a prudent nation that welcomes commodities from foreign countries when they are cheaper than we ourselves can produce—to a country that now imports more than one third of all manufactured goods. Britain is the fifth largest industrial economy, but our imports, as a percentage of our gross domestic product, our overall wealth, are 34 per cent., and rising, and they are higher than those of Germany, France, Italy, the USA and —surprise, surprise — Japan. I submit that 34 per cent. is a terrifying and unnecessary statistic.

In the last seven years we in this country have witnessed a radical change of gears. Now we are seeing an exciting reverse in Britain's economic decline, a reappearance of British vitality and a rediscovery of the vigorous inventiveness that is worthy of the country that was the birthplace of the steam engine and the cradle of industry.

The complacency that brought about our decline, and certainly installed in many of us a preference for imports that were better designed, cheaper and more reliable, has been checked. The institutional arthritis — a disease characterised by too many regulations, too many laws, too powerful unions, too high taxes and too many interests —shows every sign of remission. We, the British, have taken a very long time to learn to be competitive and we still cannot afford to make a wrong turn, but the facts and

figures show that we are going in the right direction. We simply cannot afford to retreat into protectionism. Instead, we must use the tried and true formula of investment in high technology to create growth and to improve our living standards.

However, there is something that every citizen in Britain can do as well. Every man, woman and child in this country can influence the future of this country—and influence it powerfully—by what they buy. That means, first, looking for a product that is British made and, if it is good enough or, better still, if it is better, then buy British. No consumer should be deprived of choice, but if every British consumer makes just a little effort to see if a British product is available, to compare and, if it is good enough, then to buy British, the result will be greater job security and greater creation of jobs.

I am not saying that that is easy. We are now so inundated with imports that, if we tried, we probably could not find a British typewriter, or dishwasher, or car radio. I am saying that all we have to do is to try.

Two organisations in this country are dedicated to raising our consumer consciousness. One of these is Think British. It has published some troubling and fascinating statistics. Import penetration of all manufactured goods has risen from 25 per cent. in 1981 to 34 per cent. today. Without a campaign to think British, imports will certainly grow. The average household of a husband, wife and two children spends about £110 a week on consumer goods, services, food and drink. Of this £110, an average of £30 is spent on imported goods, and this is rising.

Research carried out by *The Economist* intelligence unit shows that if consumers switched just £5 a week, which is now spent on imported products, to quality British products, within two years the result would be the creation of 580,000 jobs and a £1·5 billion improvement in the balance of payments. I am sure that is of great interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) because jobs are of great importance to him. That improvement could be achieved by the modest switch of £5 a week from imports back to quality British goods and services. If more than £5 a week were switched, the results would be even better.

These statistics are striking, but more startling is the fact that they do not seem to be taken to heart by the British public. To change this, I urge the acceptance of three duties—duties that are the opposite of trade duties—which are intended to lay to rest any attraction that those dated trade duties might have.

The duties that I have in mind are a duty on those who manufacture and market goods in this country, a duty on the purchasers and a duty on the advertising agencies and the media. As I have emphasised from the beginning, manufacturers have to produce goods of the right quality at competitive prices and deliver quickly when they say they will. West Germans buy goods produced in Germany because they are good, not because they are cheaper or because West Germans are patriotic. That procedure is right. For that to occur here, we look to the manufacturers.

A very promising effort in this direction has been the Better Made in Britain initiative. This group was set up to jolt manufacturers into producing what retailers really want. It holds exhibitions where retailers exhibit products that they import and where one hears the often depressing stories that led retailers to look outside Britain — predictable sagas of poor quality, unrealistic times and delivery dates not kept. In those exhibitions hungry and determined British manufacturers prowl and plot how they can outmatch the competition. Manufacturers have learnt the lesson of the 1980s, that we simply have to work harder and manage smarter.

The figures of Better Made in Britain estimate that for every £35,000 of imports, one job is lost. That is a gloomy statistic. But there is also a growing number of success stories. One example is the Stuart Mensley Knitwear company. In 1983 the company employed 120 people. Today it employs 500 people because of contracts that grew out of Better Made in Britain. There are many other examples, too.

The second duty is on the purchaser — both the retailer and the consumer. Over Easter I was in the United States of America. Its trade deficit in 1986 towered towards $170 billion, or 4 per cent. of its gross domestic product. Such a huge deficit is too great to sustain. It poses terrible threats to the world economy, especially as it leads inexorably to protectionism. Everywhere I went in the United States of America I was struck by the abundance of foreign-made goods to the point of absurdity. I found a 100 per cent. cotton shirt in a shop in Greenwood, Mississippi — the land of cotton — that was made in China. America is in a severe crisis simply because it has abandoned the label "Made in the USA". They have dealt with that problem by going deeper and deeper into debt. That is a warning to Britain, if we need it.

If we look in our own homes at our televisions, cookers, refrigerators, irons, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and kitchen clocks or at the clothes and shoes in our cupboards, we can see how far we have gone in the same direction as the Americans. One will not always want to buy British, even after one has thought about it, but the thing is to think British. The job saved by buying British could be one's own.

The third duty is both a duty and a challenge and it is aimed at the members of our society who have already made spectacular profits from selling British — the advertising and media folk. I want them to invest the skills and talents so brilliantly evident in the selling of British in the buying of British. Seven different agencies worked on the publicity programmes surrounding the three major privatisations — £12 million was spent on British Telecom, £29 million on the sale of British Gas and £6·5 million on British Airways. I propose that the agencies which have been instrumental in those privatisation campaigns should each create one television advertisement which will bring home to the British consumer the vital connection between the shopping bag and the dole queue.

We need a nationwide campaign which brings the same sense of urgency and possibility that inspired more than 3 million people to buy shares for the first time in British Telecom, British Gas, British Airways and other privatised companies. I challenge those writers, actors and actresses, designers and cameramen to invest their imaginations and skills in a campaign that will make every consumer a shareholder in Britain's future. As British advertising is an art envied and exported throughout the world, I feel that the campaign will be a celebration of that unique British product as well. At the very best, it should be "pure genius".

I have made it clear that Britain cannot afford to retreat into protectionism, which serves only to protect poor design, inferior workmanship and irresponsible delivery. British products must be bought because they deserve to

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

be bought, because they meet the standards of quality and service. Above all, we must all be involved in this battle to regain Britain's competitive edge in the battle for jobs and for the revival of growth. We need a united front—a productive work force, the creative talents of the highly skilled persuaders and, finally, the conscious and caring consumer, the British public. If we can form a consensus, it could mean—we must bear this in mind—the creation of more than 500,000 jobs in two years. I believe that that is a goal that we all support.

9.7 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) for raising this extremely important topic and especially for the lucid and persuasive way in which he put his case, the way in which he set out his three goals and the imaginative and compelling way in which he discussed those three possible approaches. I assure him that we fully share his keenness for competitive British goods not just to capture a larger share of world markets but to recapture a larger share of our home markets. The whole House knows that we must expand our industrial base if we are to secure for the United Kingdom the extra jobs and living standards that we want.

After six years of steady growth, exports of manufactured goods are at an all-time record; and they look set to grow even further this year. Manufacturing industry should therefore grow faster than the rest of the economy. Britain's successes in exporting are well known and, of course, they are to be encouraged and applauded. But it must be remembered that a pound earned at home is of absolutely equal value to a pound earned abroad.

Last year, as my hon. Friend reminded us, imports again grew faster than exports, with all the signs, I am sorry to say, that they will continue to do so this year. A sustained effort will be needed if we are to ensure that the growing demand in the home market is to be met by our own industry and not someone else's. It is true—I know that my hon. Friend will admit this—that most of the free world trading nations, even West Germany, which has been acknowledged as successful, import on a substantial scale. We have to import that which we cannot make.

One of the regrettable elements to which my hon. Friend drew attention is the fact that, with the glut of imports, we have lost the capacity to make certain things in our own country. Even were the British people to be alerted in the way he suggested to the possibility of choosing a British product and testing its qualities against a foreign import, the British product simply does not exist. We all regret that. It need not necessarily be a permanent omission. British manufacturing is recovering at a fast enough pace for it to begin to look seriously at the possibility of returning to some of the markets and some of the products that it has had to cede in more difficult times. But that is a second stage. We have to lay the goundwork along the lines that my hon. Friend suggested.

Of course, even when we can make certain things, there can be sound economic arguments that mean that it is preferable to import and to use our own resources for something that we do better. Of course, we cannot ignore the matter—I do not think for one moment that my hon. Friend intended to—of customer choice. But—I cannot emphasise this strongly enough—I recognise the concern about our level of imports and about whether employment opportunities are being put in jeopardy by the constantly rising level. Although many of my own instincts are to support a "Buy British" policy, I recognise that it will be effective only if it is equated with a customer's need to get value for money.

Of course, protection is not necessarily the way to a better trading performance. Insulating domestic industries from the stimulus of international competition, as my hon. Friend properly reminded us, encourages inefficiency and resistance to change. But the Government have already put considerable effort into ridding British industry of such handicaps. Industrial relations are being transformed, and our reputation for quality is gradually and painstakingly being restored. Our policies derive from certainty that industry has to be competitive. We are therefore concerned to create the climate in which industry can thrive. I do not propose to drench my hon. Friend or the House with the statistics that we hear often enough about the progress that we are making, but the conditions in which British industry is now operating have improved out of all measure.

When it comes to front-line action in making and selling goods, it is the responsibility of each supplier to make sure that he knows what the customer wants. That makes communication between buyers and sellers vitally important. In addition, the supplier must then try to match the quality, design, delivery and price expectations of the customer. Getting the communication right is not entirely a matter for suppliers. A great deal of power is wielded by purchasers, and the large ones especially have a responsibility to use that power effectively. The Government believe that it is in purchasers' own interests to use their commercial influence to help to improve the competitiveness of their suppliers. They stand to get better value for money, plus the cost and efficiency benefits of having a strong supplier base close at hand.

That has certainly been the Government's approach to public purchasing. Our guidelines on public purchasing require public purchasers to secure best value for money. They remind public purchasers that, by deploying their massive purchasing power of £40 billion per annum on assets, goods and services to ensure the development of constructive buyer-supplier relationships, they can help to ensure that their own needs are met most cost-effectively and that the wider competitiveness of British industry is enhanced. In essence, we want public purchasers to buy products, processes and services that reflect the requirements, in terms and price, of world markets.

We can all draw encouragement from the fact that our public purchasing is 95 per cent. British sourced. That shows that, even if the strict guidelines relating to the quality, delivery, appropriate meeting and conformity of needs are applied, and applied scrupulously, they do not necessarily exclude a 95 per cent. British purchasing content.

The practices that public purchasers are asked to follow to achieve this include an early dialogue about their requirements with potential suppliers; encouragement of innovation; specifying requirements in performance terms rather than detailed design which may stifle innovation; framing specifications around appropriate standards to enable economies of scale and to help exports; encouraging suppliers to be assessed to British Standard 5750—the standard for quality systems; and, where appropriate, insisting on independently certified goods to

reduce in-house inspection costs and costly failures; maintenance of even ordering patterns to allow efficient production planning; and debriefing of suppliers on request.

Similar initiatives are being taken by the more forward-looking parts of British industry. "Positive purchasing" is a phrase which is increasingly cropping up in discussions with companies. It describes a practical way of stimulating greater activity in the economy. Like the public purchasing initiative, it involves organisations in carefully examining their purchasing practices. The aim is to ensure that they are getting the best possible value from their suppliers in terms of quality, design, price and delivery. It involves them in developing constructive partnerships with suppliers which will encourage the development of more competitive products. This approach, if widely adopted, should provide opportunities for the purchasers to obtain better value for money and for British manufacturers to prove their worth and expand their markets.

The retail sector in particular, with its enormous purchasing power, is potentially very influential. My colleagues and officials in the Department of Trade and Industry have been discussing these issues with the major retail companies. More generally, because positive purchasing policies must start from a commitment at the top, my colleagues are meeting the chief executives of major companies to encourage more to follow the good example of those, such as Marks and Spencer, which have combined a thoroughly commercial approach with very high levels of United Kingdom sourcing.

The process of communication is also greatly assisted by the enterprise of such initiatives as Better Made in Britain and I was especially glad to hear the tribute paid by my hon. Friend to that organisation. Those exhibitions make an important contribution to getting across the message that the quality of British goods and the efficiency of British companies have improved faster than consumer's attitudes towards them. That change is the key to widening the awareness that I believe will achieve the results which we all want and which have been shown can be achieved in public purchasing.

That is achieved by bringing the requirements of industrial purchasers and retailers to the notice of large numbers of suppliers. So far, the exhibitions have covered clothing, knitwear, footwear, home furnishings, lighting, carpets, furniture, textiles, do-it-yourself kits, building products and hardware. All those have been extremely effective in heightening the awareness of purchasers to British alternatives, often in cases where purchasers did not realise such alternatives existed until they attended the exhibition and realised the full scale of what was available.

The "Think British" campaign to which my hon. Friend referred is also relevant. The campaign specifically aims to raise consumer awareness of the quality of British goods and to encourage consumers to seek out competitive United Kingdom products. My hon. Friend suggested an advertising campaign, and I like that idea very much. I can see that his challenge to those specialists who have made very large sums of money from advertising for various privatisation campaigns should be considered very seriously by those organisations and I hope that we will hear more about that idea.

The Department is already supporting the "Think British" campaign to research ways of setting up a general advertising campaign. Where there is an element of direct Government support—as my hon. Friend is aware, and the House accepts with varying degrees of tolerance—that must be consistent with the treaty of Rome. It must draw consumers' attention to the quality of goods built to certain recognised quality criteria rather than relate them to any particular national origin. Industry, like the Government, is bound by its treaty of Rome obligations. We cannot discriminate, directly or indirectly, against the products of other member nations. Any advertising campaign which has Government sponsorship must have regard to those obligations.

A great deal is being done, both by Government and by industry, to assist in the all-important process of communication between users and suppliers. I draw the House's attention also to the practical help my Department provides to companies which, in trying to match the expectations of their customers or potential customers, find that they need to improve the quality, design or marketing of their goods.

In 1983 we launched the national quality campaign as part of our wider effort to increase the competitiveness of British industry. The aim was to produce in industry a total commitment to quality. After extensive launch promotions, the campaign concentrated on encouraging the total quality approach on a sectoral basis, and on companies interested in promoting quality with their suppliers and sub-contractors. The response from industry, particularly the willingness of management and others to work constructively together, with support from the Department of Trade and Industry, has been most encouraging.

British industry has advanced in its recovery and the quality of its products is greatly improved, yet a certain hangover from earlier days, when people regrettably bought the foreign product because it was chic or fashionable to do so, still colours the attitude of consumers. All British manfacturers should return to their former practice of proudly and confidently marking the origin of their products. The imprint "Made in England" or "Made in Britain" has largely disappeared. One wag has said that it is more often found on goods from Taiwan than on goods made in Britain.

An essential part of the campaign my hon. Friend suggested is for consumers to have all the help we can give them in determining whether products are made in England or Britain. The treaty of Rome does not prevent British manufacturers from marking the origin of their products. The reputation of manufacturers is such that they should consider this seriously. The House should be grateful to my hon. Friend for his service in putting the argument so succinctly. It is an important subject. I hope that he will remain in touch with me and my Department and that the original and imaginative challenge he threw down to the various advertising agencies will be considered seriously by them.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 30 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MASONIC TRUST FOR GIRLS AND BOYS BILL

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered upon Tuesday 5 May.

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 7 May.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 7 May at Seven o'clock.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 7 May.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 5 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Family Taxation

3. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the tax position of a couple with two children, receiving half average earnings, has changed since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Their real take-home pay is up by 17½ per cent., but despite that they pay almost £1 a week less in income tax and national insurance contributions than they would have if Labour's 1979 tax regime had simply been adjusted in line with inflation.

Mr. Nellist: I asked a question about the Tories' tax position, not Labours' tax position. Why does the Minister not at least repeat the answer given in *Hansard* on 27 March this year—that the real position for a couple, with two children, on half average earnings is that in 1979 they paid 12 per cent. of their income in direct tax while today they pay 16·5, per cent. a real rise of over a third in direct taxation? At the same time, yuppy employees in the City of London on 2,000 times average earnings pay 25 per cent. less in direct taxation. The Prime Minister said before the 1979 and 1983 general elections that taxes should be cut. Taxes were not cut then, so why should we believe her today?

Mr. Lamont: I repeat, for the hon. Gentleman's benefit, that the take-home pay of a person on half average earnings is up by 17½ per cent. That is a very substantial increase. As the hon. Gentleman is so indignant about the burden of taxation, perhaps he could say what the effect will be of Labour's policies.

Mr. Chapman: If national insurance conributions are included in assessing the take-home pay of a person on half average industrial earnings, as my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said in his first answer, does he agree that, although great progress has been made in reducing the overall taxation and increasing the amount of take-home pay of such a person, it is still about a quarter of his total gross pay? Therefore, does he agree that it must remain a high priority to reduce taxation levels further for such people?

Mr. Lamont: Of course. We are very firmly of the view that taxes ought to be reduced, and we keep on saying that. It remains the Government's objective to reduce further the burden of taxation. As my hon. Friend said, this is particularly important for the lower paid.

Dr. McDonald: Why will Ministers not come clean about this issue? Tax and national insurance contributions for those on half average earnings have gone up, as my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) stated, from 12 to 16 per cent. According to the Government's answer, even 2p off the standard rate has made no difference in the proportion of tax paid. Is the Financial Secretary not aware that the post-tax pay increases for the top earners have been at double the rate of increase of those on half average earnings? Since this question refers to the total burden of tax, will he admit that indirect taxes, including VAT, cost the very poorest almost a quarter of their income but the richest merely one sixth? When will Ministers come clean about their distribution of the burden of taxation?

Mr. Lamont: If the hon. Lady is so indignant about the burden of taxation on the poor, why did she vote against reducing it yesterday?

Profit-related Pay

5. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has received to the proposals for profit-related pay announced in his Budget.

14. **Mr. Soames** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has received to the proposals for profit-related pay announced in his Budget.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I am glad to say that over 3,500 employers have registered their interest in profit-related pay with the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Hicknet: Is not the attraction of profit-related pay much the same as privatisation to those who work in the industries? It gives them a share in the industries and a share in the profitability of the industry in which they work.

Mr. Lawson: Yes, I believe that my hon. Friend is right. Indeed, I would go further and say that there are two distinct benefits that arise from profit-related pay. The first is the greater interest that employees have in the profitability of their company and the better labour relations that stem from that. The second is the greater degree of flexibility that is introduced into the pay system. One of the big problems in this country has been an excessively rigid pay system. Therefore, I am particularly glad that as many as 3,500 employers, many of them large employers, have already registered their interest in profit-related pay with the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Soames.

Mr. Skinner: He is not here.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: Ever present.

Now that the Chancellor seems to be in full stride regarding profit-related pay, will he answer the question that has been put to us continually by the lobbies of the nurses and the other Health Service workers? How could the nurses, ill-paid as they are, obtain any benefit from the profit-related pay system that the Chancellor keeps bandying about?

Mr. Lawson: Nurses should benefit considerably from the reduction in the basic rate of income tax by 2p in the pound, which the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends voted against yesterday.

Rates

6. **Mr. Holt** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact on the economy of the level of local authority rates and spending now announced for 1987-88.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): Local authorities in Great Britain are planning to increase their current expenditure by more than 8 per cent. this year over last, well above inflation and what the Government believe to be necessary. The excess will be met from the reserve, and will not add to the planning total, but this inevitably means less is available for other services. The result of this overspending is rate increases averaging nearly 7 per cent., so it also means a higher than necessary additional impost on businesses.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Audit Commission has established that there are potentially £2 million-worth of savings that could be made within local government, particularly if places such as Cleveland cut out the £250,000 being spent this year on political advertising at the ratepayers' expense?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. By a slip of the tongue I think that my hon. Friend said £2 million-worth of savings. In fact, just to get it clear, the Audit Commission believes that £2 billion-worth of savings are available. He is absolutely right about Cleveland. I understand that that Labour-controlled council is increasing its total expenditure by over 13 per cent. this year, which is the third highest increase for the counties. It is no wonder, therefore, that Cleveland has the second highest county council rate in England, and that is bound to have a heavy adverse effect on businesses there. My hon. Friend is entirely right.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Before the right hon. Gentleman quotes the Audit Commission too much, he should recall that the head of the Audit Commission, John Banham, now the head of the Confederation of British Industry, has gone on record as saying that local government is more efficient than central Government. Should the right hon. Gentleman not be looking to his own areas of expenditure rather than berating those local authorities?

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman, who is always fair in these matters, will know that we have done a great deal in that respect. We have got the numbers of civil servants in central Government down substantially without reductions in the effectiveness of services. In many other ways, and through many initiatives, we are making substantial savings in administration and in the cost of the programmes. I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that it is important to achieve efficiency in central Government as well as local government, and we devote a great deal of our time to doing that.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although most Conservative local authorities have increased rates by 5·5 per cent., Labour, alliance and hung councils have increased their rates by about 11 per cent.? Will he also consider what the alliance leader of Derbyshire county council said? She said that she supported the Labour party on most matters but could not support it on its rate increases. Is that not gross hypocrisy on the part of the alliance? Is the alliance trying to have it both ways by supporting extra spending without considering the consequences of such spending? Will he acknowledge that Derbyshire is the highest rated council in the country?

Mr. MacGregor: On the latter points, my hon. Friend is entirely right. Indeed, I listened with interest to what he said about the alliance leader in his county. It rather mirrors what the Liberal and Social Democratic Members do in the House. They urge a good deal more expenditure, vote against tax cuts and then do not know where to go from there. I agree also with what my hon. Friend said at the beginning of his question. It is significant that rate increases in Conservative councils this year are 5·4 per cent., whereas in Labour councils, other than rate-capped councils, they are 12·4 per cent. That speaks for itself. The burden on domestic ratepayers and businesses is clear.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that the new rating system—the community charge—will have a dreadful, catastrophic impact on many industrial towns and their economies in the northern region? Have the Government measured the impact that the new tax will have in so far as it will wipe out tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of pounds from spending power in such communities?

Mr. MacGregor: When the hon. Gentleman talks about business, he is talking, not about the community charge, but about the new non-domestic national business rate that we shall introduce. He will discover that many businesses in his area will find that it is more beneficial to them than the present system.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the effect on people in Ealing, and my constituents in particular, of the rate increase of 65 per cent. that was imposed by Ealing council? That will represent an average increase of £5 or £6 per week, and some people will have to pay £12 a week. It will hurt the elderly, the disabled, industrialists, jobs, prices and everything else. Is it not wicked and disgraceful? Is it not typical of members of the modern Labour party? That is just what they would be like in government, and that is why they must be strongly rejected.

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He has clearly made the point about the impact of a Labour council in Ealing. Bearing in mind the rate increases in Conservative-controlled councils, I am sure that many ratepayers in Ealing will wish that they lived under a Conservative administration at local level and therefore benefited from the much lower rate increases that are happening elsewhere.

Mr. Nellist: When the Minister replied to the hon. Member for Langburgh (Mr. Holt) about the amount of money spent on political advertising, why did he not admit to the House that £42 million—*[Interruption.]* If the Chancellor would keep quiet, the Minister could hear me. The sum of £42 million was spent on the sale of British Gas. Hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent by the Government on political advertising of Rolls-Royce, British Telecom and the rest. The Minister prays in aid the Government's record on the Civil Service and the spending by central Government. If the Government are so clever, why are thousands of civil servants in Coventry and elsewhere out on strike this week because of pay cuts over the past seven years?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is only envious that our policies on privatisation are so hugely successful and of great benefit to the economy and are being copied around the world. It is just a pity that he does not understand the significance of them.

Charities

7. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking changes to the taxation treatment of charities.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): Charities have enthusiastically acknowledged the very substantial measures on the tax treatment of charitable giving and other aspects of charitable work introduced by the present Government.

Mr. Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware that charities have been and are conducting political campaigns? Oxfam has been conducting one, and War on Want is in the process of doing another. Indeed, the director of Oxfam has conducted a campaign in *The Times* today. Does my hon. Friend agree that for four charities to conduct these campaigns is a fraud on those who subscribe to them and endangers the taxation advantages that the charities enjoy?

Mr. Stewart: Like my hon. Friend, I agree that the abuse of charitable funds in the way that he has described is deeply to be deplored and that that is not the basis on which tax relief is given. I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, because the Charity Commission has responsibilities for seeing that charities do not abuse the funds that are entrusted to them.

Mr. Ashton: But is it not true that public schools enjoy charitable status, and have they not been turning out apparatchiks and Lobby fodder for the Conservative Benches for a century? What does the Minister intend to do about that?

Mr. Stewart: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not regard education as a suitable matter for charitable support.

Opposition Parties' Policies (Costs)

8. **Mr. Sims** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will prepare estimates of the cost of the programmes announced by the Opposition parties.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already costed the Labour party's commitments, which would amount to an additional £34,000 million in a full year. The SDP and Liberal parties' pledges are so vague and confused that they cannot be costed.

Mr. Sims: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. I assume that the £34 billion figure that he has mentioned has been calculated by assessing the cost of various items of policy to which the Labour party is pledged. Can he tell the House whether he has received any representations or objections about specific items that he has costed? If he has not, does he agree that, if the Labour party does not object to the parts, it can hardly object to the whole?

Mr. MacGregor: I have often made clear exactly what items are in the £34 billion commitment and how it has been costed. I have made the costings available to the Labour party and have said that, if it will point out a single one that is not official Labour party policy, I will withdraw it. The Labour party has not done so. Almost weekly, Opposition Front Bench spokesmen for social security, education, overseas aid and health keep confirming the pledges. I again ask the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) when he is going to repudiate them. It is perfectly clear that we would have the same situation as the one that we had under the last Labour Government, because if a Labour Government carried out their spending programme they would be back to the International Monetary Fund in no time.

Mr. Winnick: As regards costing programmes, would the Chief Secretary be good enough to tell the House and the country how much extra the average household would have to pay if VAT were to be charged on children's clothing and other essential items, including food? Is it not perfectly clear that what is now being planned by the Tories, should they return, is precisely to levy VAT on such items?

Mr. MacGregor: It is quite extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman can come forward with suggestions like that, when he must know that, in order to pay for the kind of programme to which his party is committed, VAT would have to go up very substantially. The cost of his party's programme would be the equivalent of a VAT rate of just under 50p in the pound. The hon. Gentleman puts that point because he is so desperately anxious to find a smokescreen for the cost of Labour's programmes and their tax implications for ordinary people.

Mr. Maclean: In view of the pledge made recently by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) that the alliance would publish the costings of its policies before the election, purely in the interests of open government would my right hon. Friend agree to run the alliance programme through his Treasury computer? Will he also get his Treasury experts to cost the alliance programmes? Or are they so vague that it would be impossible to tell what they cost?

Mr. MacGregor: Indeed, there is nothing as vague as the alliance programme. I have been through the entire document "The Time Has Come", and it is impossible to cost its contents because the Liberals and the SDP do not pledge themselves specifically to anything. Whenever they do, they immediately have to go back to the drawing board, either because they are incapable of agreeing on the policies, or because they have not thought them through.

Mr. MacKenzie: First, might I ask the Chief Secretary, who precisely is paying for those costings? Is he using public money to do his own costings for the benefit of his colleagues and to prepare election ammunition? Secondly, if he is using public money for that purpose, will he note that some of us take strong exception to that? Thirdly, if the civil servants have got it massively wrong, where has that money been coming from and who is paying for the costings?

Mr. MacGregor: No additional public resources are employed in the costings.

Life Funds (Capital Gains)

9. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received representations concerning his plans to change the treatment of capital gains in the life funds.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A number of representations have been received and are being considered. I have also discussed the matter with the Association of British Insurers. There will be an opportunity for detailed debate in Committee on the Finance Bill.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the life industry is concerned that his proposed changes in the capital gains of life funds will be at the expense of the savings of existing policyholders, who will as a result be put at some disadvantage against other forms of collective savings such as unit trusts?

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend has said. Obviously, there will be further discussions about this. I do not necessarily accept that life policy holders will be disadvantaged compared with unit trust holders, because there are advantages for them too. For example, a unit trust holder will pay income tax up to his marginal rate and will pay capital gains above the threshold. We believe that the impact of the changes will be minimal, but, of course, we shall listen to what is said.

Mr. Blair: Is the Financial Secretary aware that this is of critical importance to mortgage holders? Is he also aware that 50 per cent. of new mortgages last year were endowment mortgages? Can he confirm that more than £1,500 will be lost on the payout from an ordinary £30,000 endowment mortgage if the Government's proposals go through? Why are the Government hitting millions of small investors with higher rates of tax, while leaving their friends in the City untouched?

Mr. Lamont: The impact on particular policies will vary according to different companies. I do not accept the figure that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Some companies have said that there will be practically no effect. We estimate that the extra tax that would have been paid in 1985 on those policies would have been less than £20 million. That compares with the policyholders' funds of some £70 billion, so the impact will be very small.

Payroll Giving

10. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the response to the new payroll giving schemes.

18. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a further statement about the implementation of payroll giving schemes.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The new payroll giving scheme has made an encouraging start. The Inland Revenue has approved 11 agencies to run the scheme and 300 employers have already signed contracts to participate. I expect many more to follow.

Mr. Howarth: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the figures that he has given those 300 employers represent nealy 1 million employees, and that those figures mark a most auspicious start for the payroll giving scheme? Will he confirm that, since this Government came to power, giving to the 280 charities has already doubled? Does he expect that, with the payroll giving scheme, we shall see a further large increase of charitable giving to charities great and small? Will he also confirm that the administrative costs to employers of operating the schemes will be an expense allowable against tax?

Mr. Stewart: I welcome my hon. Friend's support for the payroll giving scheme. As he said, it has made a most encouraging start. I understand that information about new employers who will be taking part is coming in every day. The scheme will clearly involve a big increase in charitable giving, which has already doubled since the Government came to power in 1979. Already, tax relief of about £500 million is given by the Revenue in respect of charitable giving and we shall be only too pleased if the scheme greatly increases that. So far as I can comment on my hon. Friend's last point, I believe that to be the case, but if there is any problem I shall let him know.

Mr. Yeo: Does my hon. Friend agree that the vast majority of charities do extremely valuable work, which fully deserves the introduction of tax concessions such as the payroll giving scheme, but that organisations such as War on Want, which have used their funds to finance overtly political advertisements, are abusing not only their charitable status but the tax concessions that that status bestows?

Mr. Stewart: I deplore the abuse of charitable status of the sort that my hon. Friend has described. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) made heroic efforts to be in the Chamber to raise the matter earlier, and I know that it is one of widespread concern.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister accept that it is an appalling indictment of the Government's policies that an increasing number of well-respected charities, such as Oxfam, along with other well-respected bodies such as the

Archbishop of Canterbury's commission on urban priority areas, have felt the need to criticise the Government's policies?

Mr. Stewart: Political behaviour by those involved in charitable work is always to be regretted. However, that does not invalidate the wish of all those in the House to support genuine charitable activities, and I hope that we will be able to continue to do so.

Mr. Thurnham: Does not the much increased level of charitable giving give the lie to those who claim that Britain is much less generous under this Government?

Mr. Stewart: The public have been increasingly generous to charitable causes since 1979. As I have said, charitable giving has about doubled. That is one of the beneficial consequences of the strong increase in standards of living and take-home pay, that have been enjoyed at all levels of the population since 1979.

Mr. Gould: Does the extent of charitable giving show that the people are more compassionate than the Government?

Mr. Stewart: In measures that we have been discussing and in many other ways; the Government are encouraging charitable giving. In this sense I am sure that the Government are entirely with the grain of the population.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my hon. Friend accept that the payroll giving scheme has been widely welcomed by many charities, and even by those which are evidently involved in political activities? Will my hon. Friend accept also, however, that the view is gaining ground that some of the giving is almost irrevocable and is difficult to cancel by employees, while some employers regard the scheme as being unduly bureaucratic? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to reassure charities, employers and employees that the scheme is easy to administer?

Mr. Stewart: I think that I can give the assurance that my hon. Friend seeks. We went to great lengths to try to ensure that the operation of the scheme would not be unduly onerous or bureaucratic for employers. That is why we insisted on having independent agencies. The excellent start that the scheme has made suggests that it cannot be too off-putting to employers, otherwise there would not be so many of them either already contracted or wishing so to be.

Value Added Tax

13. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to extend the scope of value added tax.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No, Sir.

Mr. Dubs: Is it not becoming increasingly clear to the House and to the country that the Conservative party intends to fight the next general election on two manifestos —*[Interruption.]*— one that will be published openly, and a secret document in which there are to be proposals to increase the rate of VAT and to extend its scope to food and other products? Despite the fact that the Minister has answered no to my main question, the Prime Minister is not prepared to deny the assertion categorically? When will the Government be honest with the House and the people?

Mr. Stewart: We shall certainly fight the next election on two manifestos, ours and yours.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall be standing at the next general election, but I shall not have a manifesto.

Mr. Stewart: Our manifesto, Mr. Speaker, will be of great assistance to us, but I think that the Opposition parties' manifestos will be of even greater advantage to us.

Sir William Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that if any of the Opposition's pledges are put into effect VAT will have to be increased to about 49p in the pound? Will my hon. Friend accept also that the collection costs of VAT, given the thresholds that apply on the turnover of a small business, which is roughly twice the national average wage, are extremely high? Does he agree that the administrative burden on small businesses is onerous and, despite the EEC, would it not be a good idea to have a threshold of about £50,000 a year to assist small businesses?

Mr. Stewart: I note what my hon. Friend said about the threshold. I hope that he and my other hon. Friends will recognise that the measures we are introducing this year for cash accounting and annual accounting should greatly reduce the burden of income tax for small businesses.

Mr. Madden: Why have papers concerning the extension of VAT in Britain been withdrawn from the May meeting of Common Market Finance Ministers?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman can ask whatever questions of the Commission he likes. The Government's policy is to reduce taxation; the Labour party's is to increase it. I am sorry that Labour Members have to resort to repeated smears to cover up the fact that they are the party of high taxation and we are the party which has reduced taxation.

Mr. Higgins: May I draw attention to the report of the Treasury Select Committee entitled "The Defence of VAT Zero-Rating" which contains clear evidence that the Government are determined to fight the case in the European Court, where the European Commission is seeking to extend the base of VAT? Is that not a very clear indication of the Government's views on the subject?

Mr. Stewart: I thank my right hon. Friend for making that clear to the House. The actions of the Government are well known and have the support of the House.

Mr. Hattersley: Does the Minister's answer mean that he is saying to the House what up to now the Prime Minister has not been prepared to say, that when the EEC recommends that Britain imposes VAT on food, fuel, children's clothing and new building, the Government will veto it?

Mr. Stewart: The Commission has not put forward such proposals. I mean what I say.

Exchange Rates

15. **Mr. Pike** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the current level of exchange rates.

Mr. Lawson: The sterling index at noon today stood at 73·2.

Mr. Pike: Does the Chancellor realise how much damage the present high rate of the pound is doing to our manufacturing industries? Is it the Government's policy to keep an artificially high pound as their only means of controlling inflation?

Mr. Lawson: My impression, from a number of visits to manufacturing industries during the Easter recess and from reading very carefully the CBI survey of industrial trends for manufacturing industry, is that manufacturing industry is very well satisfied with the economic conditions at present. It is doing very well and I am very glad that it is. The one thing it dreads and fears is the possibility of a change of Government.

It is well known that the Labour party—this came out from the report to the Treasury Select Committee of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who is a member of the Opposition Front-bench — is in favour of putting up corporation tax to 52 per cent. and of having a dramatic devaluation of the pound, as a result of which inflation would rocket back to the 27 per cent. it was when a Labour Government were last in office. That would be the worst possible thing for manufacturing industry.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the main causes of the strength of sterling at present is the fact that the world financial markets are convinced that the Government will be re-elected? If there were to be a change in polls, with the possibility of a Labour Government or, even worse, a hung Parliament, is it not likely that there would be immediate pressure on sterling?

Mr. Lawson: It is true, as my hon. Friend has said, that if there were to be a change of Government it would be an economic disaster for Britain. The massive confidence that there is worldwide in the British economy, which is demonstrated by the strength of the pound in the foreign exchange market and in a number of other ways, would evaporate overnight. Fortunately, that nightmare will not turn into a reality.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: Can the Chancellor tell us whether he is now endeavouring to pursue the same exchange rate policy that he would if we were a full member of the EMS, and, if so, what is the advantage of doing that from outside?

Mr. Lawson: I am happy to answer the right hon. Gentleman's question. As he will be aware, six of the seven Finance Ministers of the Group of Seven met in Paris in February, when we agreed that, having achieved a substantial realignment of currencies following the Plaza meeting in September 1985, it was now right to try to keep the major exchange rates roughly stable. That is what we are seeking to do, and the British Government's policy is in line with that agreement, which was reaffirmed in Washington when we had a meeting of the G7 at the spring meeting of the IMF. That is not only part of an international agreement which would be beneficial worldwide, but it is in the interests of British industry that that should be maintained.

Mr. Forman: Is it not clear that the recent co-ordinated efforts by my right hon. Friend and other Finance Ministers of the Group of Six have had considerable success in bringing exchange rate stability in recent times through the agreements to which he referred, and has that not been excellent not only for output in Britain but for exports and import substitution?

Mr. Lawson: It has been, and, as I mentioned in the House yesterday in the course of the Finance Bill Committee stage debates—which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was, unfortunately, unable to attend because he was busy expelling a black activist from the Labour party, but it is good to have him back today — yesterday's *Financial Times* headed its leading article about the United Kingdom "An island of success". However, despite the indications that we are successful, there are problems in the rest of the world which have to be addressed and it is of first importance that there should be a successful outcome of the meeting today between President Reagan and Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan.

Budget

16. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the Budget.

Mr. Lawson: The proposals in my Budget have been widely welcomed.

Mr. Thompson: Is the Chancellor aware that there has been little evidence of any improvement, or potential improvement, of the economy of the northern region as a result of the Budget proposals, that there is little evidence of the standard of living being improved there, and that, in fact, wage levels there are decreasing and the north-south divide is becoming even more evident since the Budget proposals? What is he prepared to do about it?

Mr. Lawson: I am glad to be able to inform the hon. Gentleman that he is misinformed. The most recent report from the Association of British Chambers of Commerce made a particular point of saying how big an improvement there has been in the prosperity of business and industry in the north of England. The whole point of the policies that we are pursuing is that they benefit the whole country.

Mr. Hayes: May I say to my right hon. Friend that the Budget has been welcomed by the people of Harlow because, thanks to the success of the Government's economic policies, Harlow is now a boom town with one of the lowest rates of unemployment in the south of England. Does he not find it ironic that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) had the nerve to come to my constituency and unveil a plan — after lunch — for a thousand new jobs to be created, the majority of which would have been created by the local authority, which is Labour-controlled and is crippling my local industry?

Mr. Lawson: I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Frend on the manful efforts that he has made throughout the time that he has represented his constituency — which will ensure his continued representation of that constituency — against the activities of the local council, which have been consistently anti-business and anti-industry, as, indeed, have so many Labour councils up and down the country.

Building Societies (Interest-Only Loans)

17. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to permit derogation from the prohibition on building societies making interest-only loans.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Building Societies Act gives those societies which have total commercial assets of over £100 million the power to lend money to individuals regardless of whether interest is charged on the loan.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that building societies believe that that helpful facility, which enables elderly people to liberate the capital in their own homes to make necessary repairs, has not been stopped by the Building Societies Act? Am I right in believing that that was never the Government's intention, and will the Minister make it clear that the facility is still widely available?

Mr. Stewart: Certainly the Building Societies Act does not stop building societies from making such loans. In fact, some societies have shown reluctance to conform with the requirements of the Consumer Credit Act 1974, but other lenders are coping without difficulty. I hope that building societies will not mislead borrowers of the kind that the hon. Gentleman describes by implying that such loans cannot be made.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in implementing promptly and in full the recommended 9·5 per cent. pay increase for nurses the Government have demonstrated their continuing commitment to improving the lot of the nursing profession, which has grown by 30,000 under the present Government? Does she also agree that there is no justification for the lightning teachers' strikes, such as those that are happening in my constituency at present, when the Government have awarded teachers a 25 per cent. average increase? That is far more than my constituents in manufacturing industry have been able to obtain.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Under the last Labour Government nurses' pay actually fell in terms of what it would purchase. Under the present Government it has gone up by 30 per cent. over and above the rate of inflation. As my hon. Friend says teachers have also done very well. Their pay will have increased by 27 per cent. over and above the rate of inflation. That shows that, under this Government, the growth that we have experienced has been put to very good use, not only in reducing taxation, but in bringing an enhanced standard of living to those who work in education and the social services.

Mr. Hattersley: On the basis of the information now available to her, will the Prime Minister admit that the Government's poll tax scheme, when combined with the so-called social security reform, will result in most families in this country on joint incomes of less than £21,000 a year being worse off than they are now, before the two schemes are implemented?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware of some of the tables that have been published. He will now have to wait until we see what net incomes are and how much Labour authorities in particular spend and charge in rates.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister is trying to deny a fact that she either knows to be true or ought to know to be true. Such conduct only confirms that the Government are ruthlessly determined not to tell the truth about the financial consequences of their re-election. I put the question to the Prime Minister again. It is a matter of fact on which work has been done and has been published. Is it not true that the majority of families with joint incomes of £21,000 or less will be worse off, regardless of whether their local authority is Labour, Conservative or anything else?

The Prime Minister: What people will have to pay in rates, or later in community charge, will depend upon some of the expenditure of local authorities. Now I understand why the Leader of the Opposition is not present. It is because Ealing has increased its rate by about 62 per cent.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister is devious and disingenuous at the same time. The whole country will understand that she is determined not to tell the truth about the financial consequences of the re-election of her Government. It is all part of the secret manifesto, and we shall expose the lot.

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would give a list of the high rates of Left-wing Labour authorities and the catastrophe, not only of the high rating of ILEA, but of the appalling education.

Mrs. McCurley: Will my right hon. Friend confound the dismal Jimmies and agree with me that Scotland's economic performance is one of the success stories of this Government and that that success story will continue if a Conservative Government are re-elected?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The CBI survey relating to England, Wales and Scotland was very optimistic. It showed a level of optimism that we have not seen for a very long time. The reports of the top 50 companies in Scotland are excellent and unemployment is now falling.

Mr. Roy Jenkins *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that we may be getting close to an exciting time, but—Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. Jenkins: I recognise that the Prime Minister is bound to attach considerable importance to the views of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) on the subject of an MI5 inquiry, but will she none the less repudiate, on reflection, the extraordinary constitutional doctrine that she appeared to be propounding on Tuesday, namely, that the activities of a permanent Government agency, however monstrous they may be alleged to be, cannot be inquired into once there has been a change of Government?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the replies that I have given before and to what I said on Tuesday.

Mr. Skinner: Frit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When I call the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) he may say what he wants to say, but I have not yet called him.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman goes on like this, it will be a long time before I call him.

Mr. Maples: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to assure the House that the Government have no plans to raise the rate of VAT to the 25 per cent. that was reached under the last Labour Government?

The Prime Minister: Yes, and there are no plans to put VAT on food, either.

"World in Action"

Q2. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will acquire for the library of No. 10 Downing street a video recording of the Granada TV programme "World in Action" on the Law Officers' letter in the Westland affair, broadcast between 8 and 9 pm on Monday 30 March.

The Prime Minister: No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the Prime Minister a question of fact which has not been put to her and which she has had no opportunity to answer? Is it, or is it not, true, as the programme suggests, that her Attorney-General summoned her Cabinet Secretary to confront him with the prospect of the New Scotland Yard police at No. 10 Downing street with the Department of Trade and Industry unless she agreed to an inquiry? Is the programme telling the truth, or is it not?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the many, many answers that I have given in statements and in reply to questions. I recognise that the hon. Gentleman will go on asking questions, but nothing can conceal the poverty of his policy.

Mr. Jackson: Further to my right hon. Friend's earlier answer——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a definitive question.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Prime Minister aware that I am one of the 8 million viewers who heard that most respected reporter, James Naughtie, say—*[Laughter.]* He went to the same school as I did. James Naughtie confirmed that the centre of operations for releasing the Solicitor-General's letter was No. 10 Downing street. Can the Prime Minister tell us, therefore, why only selected parts of that letter were released? Was it because 10 Downing street considered Chris Moncrieff's shorthand not good enough to take down all of it?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member's source did not go to the same school as I did, and I am not responsible for the press.

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Oppenheim: In view of Government policy on local government expenditure, will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that Derbyshire county council recently announced a programme of massive spending increases in line with Labour pledges, but has suddenly and without explanation withdrawn the programme that it had submitted? Can my right hon. Friend think of any possible reason or any event in the near future, that might have influenced the county council's decision?

The Prime Minister: I understand that Derbyshire is the highest-rated county in England. This is very damaging to business in an area that needs more jobs, and it is highly damaging to domestic ratepayers. The county council may have had that in mind in considering future matters and events which will come about in the next 15 or so months.

Mr. Dormand: In view of the overwhelming evidence that unemployment affects the health of those without a job, confirmed in yet another medical report issued last week, will the Prime Minister say whether she feels any personal responsibility for the ill-health, some of it very serious, of thousands of people in this country, arising directly from her economic policies?

The Prime Minister: Overall, health in the United Kingdom has been improving steadily. Life expectancy continues to rise. Infant mortality has fallen by one third since 1979. When we came to power in 1979, only £7¾ billion was spent on the National Health Service. This financial year we shall spend about £20 billion, which shows the priority that we have given to the health of the people.

Q4. **Sir Anthony Kershaw** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: With regard to disarmament negotiations, is it not clear that this hopeful situation which we now have has come about because of my right hon. Friend's robust attitude and her refusal unilaterally to throw away our armaments before negotiations begin? Are there not hopeful attitudes in this negotiation which we are about to start?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I do not believe that the Soviet Union would be thinking of taking out the majority of her SS20s unless we had stood firm and deployed the cruise missiles and Pershings, something that the Labour, Liberal and Social Democratic parties voted against in this House when the decision was made. We would prefer the Soviet Union to agree to a global zero-zero on intermediate nuclear weapons. So far it has been unwilling to do that, but that is what we shall continue to ask for.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Before repeating her usual assertion that there is no connection between the 20 per cent. increase in youth unemployment in Merseyside since 1979 and the 40 per cent. increase in crime on Merseyside over which her Government has ministered since 1979, will the Prime Minister tell the House what she thinks about that well-known Victorian saying, oft repeated in Finchley, that the Devil finds work for idle hands?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has heard references several times to studies which show that there is no direct relationship between unemployment and crime. I am sure that he is very much aware that there are countries which have lower unemployment than we

have but which have higher rates of crime. I further refer him to an article in the *Daily Mail* on Wednesday 22 April by Dr. Alice Coleman, who said:

"Historically, there is no evidence that joblessness is the major stimulus to crime."

She went on to say:

"The runaway growth in offences began in the post-war period of full employment, and it was then often suggested that young delinquents were the spoilt products of affluence."

The hon. Gentleman is aware that the peak age for crime is 15. That is not related to unemployment.

Q5. **Mr. Stokes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents in the west midlands are trade unionists, many of whom are supporters of mine? Is she aware of the tremendous change in attitude that has taken place on the shop floor in recent months as a result of Government legislation, with such things as no strike agreements, the end of the closed shop and a generally much healthier and more realistic attitude among the workers? Is she aware that many of them are now capitalists, owning their houses, and shares too?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Our trade union reforms have helped to transform the climate for business. We now have the lowest number of days lost through disputes for 20 years. It is our reforms, and the way in which trade unions have responded, that are in part responsible for the excellent optimistic business survey that we have seen this week. I am delighted that under this Government far more trade unionists own their own homes and shares and have more savings than ever would have happened under Labour.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:—

TUESDAY 5 MAY—Proceedings on the Chevening Estate Bill (Lords).

Remaining stages of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill.

Motion on the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 1) 1987-88 (HC 330).

Followed by motion on the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1987-88 (HC 325).

Motion relating to the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order.

WEDNESDAY 6 MAY—Debate on the security situation in Northern Ireland, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Motion on the Police (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order.

THURSDAY 7 MAY—Commons consideration of Lords amendments to the Banking Bill.

Remaining stages of the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Bill (Lords).

Motions on financial services orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 8 MAY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 11 MAY—Private Members' motions.

Debate on nuclear power and the Government's decision on the CEGB's application to construct the Sizewell "B" power station, on a Government motion.

[Debate on Thursday 7 May

1. Financial Services Act 1986 (Delegation) Order 1987.

2. Financial Services (Transfer of functions Relating to Friendly Societies) Order (Northern Ireland) 1987.

3. Financial Services (Transfer of functions Relating to Friendly Societies) Order 1987.]

Mr. Shore: The House will want to thank the right hon. Gentleman for honouring so promptly his promise to find time for a debate on security in Northern Ireland and the renewed Provisionals' campaign of murder and terror there. May I ask four questions? First, will the right hon. Gentleman consider again the timing of the debate on the Industrial Relations (Nothern Ireland) Order? It is an important and controversial measure which should not be smuggled away from the public gaze in a late night debate. Secondly, will he consider relocating on Tuesday the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order? This measure, too, should be debated in the light of day. We would like it to come on before the rate support grant motions. Thirdly, when will those rate support grant supplementary reports be tabled?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman note our continued frustration at not having a debate on the run-down of the Merchant Navy? Early-day motion 515 is now supported by no fewer than 270 right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

[That this House notes with anxiety the continuing rapid reduction in the size of the United Kingdom-owned and registered merchant fleet; notes that this reduction is only partly offset by the increase in the number of United Kingdom-owned ships on overseas registers; expresses its concern at the adverse impact of these developments on the United Kingdom's and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defence capability and the United Kingdom economy, including shipbuilding, employment and the balance of payments account of the United Kingdom, notes the dearth of new investment in British-owned ships, whether new or secondhand, which alone can remedy the situation; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to take urgent steps in the forthcoming Budget to encourage such investment and to initiate action in the European Community to adopt domestic policies which will restore the profitability of ship owning and international policies to scrap surplus ships and unfair practices in shipbuilding and trading.]

Can the right hon. Gentleman think of any reason why we should not have a clear promise of a debate in the week beginning 11 or 18 May?

Mr. Biffen: What a provocative way for the right hon. Gentleman to end his questions. As to the hon. Gentleman's final point concerning a debate on the Merchant Navy, this matter was put to me last week and I indicated my views then. I shall take into account what the right hon. Gentleman has said, but for the moment I shall have to rest my reply where it was a week ago.

The right hon. Gentleman asked when the rate support grant reports would be tabled. I am told that they have gone down already today.

I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman said about the placing of the education order in the business for Tuesday. I cannot hold out hope that that matter can easily be rearranged, but, none the less, it can be considered through the usual channels.

I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman said about the Northern Ireland industrial relations order, which is scheduled to come on late at night. That is something that we can consider again through the usual channels.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to consider early-day motion 602 relating to the difficulties of British pensioners living in Canada?

[That this House urges Her Majesty's Government to provide retirement pensioners living in Canada with pension increases as and when they become due in Britain, with or without a social security agreement with Canada.]

As that early-day motion has been signed by more than 150 right hon. and hon. Members expressing their concern, is the House likely in the next few weeks to get some idea of the Government's attitude towards this matter?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for the constructive way in which he put his point about early-day motion 602 concerning British pensioners living in Canada. I would have thought it might first be ventilated to see whether it could be debated within the context of the Finance Bill, and I shall make inquiries to that end.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Leader of the House say, before the Wednesday debate on Irish affairs, whether there will be a statement on the creation of the promised Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier? Will he also say whether he expects the Government, before dissolution, to complete their existing business?

Does he agree that the public would regard it as an incredible waste of parliamentary time and money if the Criminal Justice Bill, which has had 36 sittings, were to be lost? In those circumstances, will the Leader of the House say whether he has come round to the idea of fixed-term Parliaments?

Mr. Biffen: I note the hon. Gentleman's second point. I am sure that the whole House noted the views that he expressed. I think that any comment upon them could be construed as revealing more than it was able to conceal, so I shall leave the matter there. As to the hon. Gentleman's first point, I can confidently say that there will not be a statement about the possibility of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier ahead of the debate that we plan for Wednesday.

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): Has my right hon. Friend observed that the Secretary of State for Defence and the Secretary-General of NATO have now added their powerful voices to the anxiety that has been expressed by an overwhelming number of Members in the motion on the Merchant Navy, to which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred? In those circumstances, does my right hon. Friend agree that the suggestion made, not for the first time by the right hon. Gentleman, about the good sense of having a debate on the Merchant Navy should be accepted by the Government, in the general national, economic and defence interest?

Mr. Biffen: I very much understand and sympathise with the points made by my right hon. Friend, but he also knows that I am, as it were, the guardian of the agenda at a time of the year when there is great pressure for committed Government business. That is a fact of which I have to take account, but I shall bear in mind what my right hon. Friend said.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Leader of the House remind the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary that the American Department of Justice and the American State Department, jointly, have received information from a unit, which I think works for the Department of Justice, called the Anti-Nazi Tracking Unit, which has made allegations, as a result of which the President of Austria, Dr. Waldheim, will not be allowed to go to the United States unless he goes there as the President of Austria? This information is important. It is available in the United States. It is relevant to activities in this country. Will the right hon. Gentleman ask for that information to be provided to us so that we can make our judgment on it?

Mr. Biffen: When the right hon. Gentleman asked for the information to be made available so that we can make our judgment, he rightly underlined the fact that we are talking about allegations and not about proof. Of course, I shall relay the right hon. Gentleman's request to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Following the question asked by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) concerning President Waldheim, is my right hon. Friend aware that I have seen the documents relating to this case and that there is a difference between allegations that have never been tried in court — there is an interesting story why they were never brought to court — and proof, but it is incontestible that President Waldheim has lied consistently about his war record and that he has proved himself by these lies to be totally unfit to hold public office? Although that is a matter for the people of Austria, surely the Government of this country can recognise the outrage that has been felt, and surely we should follow the lead given by others.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend, who clearly speaks with known experience and authority on these matters, claims that there are certain self-evident situations. I say to him in all friendliness that these are matters for individual judgment. I am being asked to find out whether there can be a ministerial responsibility for making certain documents available, and I have said that I shall look into that.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement on the A330 and A340 Airbus project? Is he aware that more than 400 A320s have been sold, but we guess that 200 sales were lost because of delays? It looks as though we have lost some sales of A330 and A340 aircraft including sales to Alitalia. Will the right hon. Gentleman please urgently consider this matter?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly pass those points on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Has my right hon. Friend noted the progress made in another place with the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust Bill, which in its present form has been welcomed by the Royal British Legion? On its arrival in this place, will the Government seek to expedite a measure which should not take too much time but which would bring comfort to former members of Her Majesty's forces and their dependants living across the Irish sea?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that once the legislation has completed its stages in another place and comes to the House of Commons the usual channels will do their utmost to see that it is dispatched with appropriate regard for the susceptibilities of the House.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): Can the Leader of the House tell us whether, and when, he expects there to be a debate on the Control of Pollution (Landed Ships Waste) Regulations 1987, which came into force on 6 April, which were laid before Parliament on 16 March and which were prayed against by the Leader of the Opposition, when I gather that there were six days remaining? Will the regulations be debated? What will happen if Parliament is dissolved? Will the regulations be in force?

May I also press the right hon. Gentleman — *[Interruption.]* This is an important matter in my pocket of the country. May I press the right hon. Gentleman on the issue of the parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) was dead right about that. It is an initiative that Parliament should take on board.

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's first request. I am afraid that I cannot give him an authoritative answer, but I shall see that he is given an answer.

As to the hon. Gentleman's second point, I do not think that I can reasonably add to what I have already said. I

[Mr. Biffen]

know that no statement will be made, but that does not mean that, subject to the views of the Chair, reference may not at least be made to it in the debates that will follow.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Has the Leader of the House, as a member of the Government, read the astonishing written answer issued late last night, but not yet published in *Hansard*, by the Minister of Transport rescinding the letter of instruction to British Rail that it should not make advance payments to the Channel tunnel project? In view of the implications of this for that project and its viability, and also in view of the implications for the general public travelling on British Rail having to pay a virtual levy to give advance payments for the construction of a tunnel, may we at least have a statement, if not a debate, on the implications of this astonishing change of policy, which appears to throw aside the assurances given in the past about public or quasi-public funding of the tunnel?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of the point that my hon. Friend has raised. Clearly it is one that commands much interest in the House. I shall see that the point is put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Reverting to the matter of President Waldheim, it is certainly the responsibility of the Home Secretary whether this very evil man is allowed into the United Kingdom——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must remind the hon. and learned Gentleman and the whole House that we should not cast reflections upon the presidents of countries with which we have friendly relations.

Mr. Janner: It is the responsibility of the Home Secretary to decide whether President Waldheim or any other such person should be allowed into the United Kingdom. May we have a statement on that?

Will there be time, before the House rises, for a debate on the shortage of resources for hospitals in Leicestershire? This is a matter upon which hon. Members on both sides of the House were agreed, and I discovered that at the Groby road heart hospital people are waiting six months for open-heart surgery because of the lack of one doctor, one anaesthetist and two beds. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members find this a laughing matter, but it is a matter of life or death for my constituents.

Mr. Biffen: With regard to the first point raised by the hon. and learned Gentleman, I have already said that I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. In so doing, I shall refer him to the points that the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised.

As to the second point, the hon. and learned Gentleman will know that the matter was debated in the recent Adjournment debate. My hon. Friends then put the case for health care in Leicestershire all the more effectively because it was put that much more moderately.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): My hon. Friend is aware that the House has spent quite a lot of time and travail putting through the Criminal Justice Bill, which is at present proceeding in another place. Can he assure me that the Government will do everything that they can to get the Bill—I am prepared to give up some of my extended summer holiday, which I may not get for another 30 years — through in this Parliament? It is important that some deals be done in the House of Lords so that, even if it means that the election is delayed for a week, we get that Bill through and thus save a lot of bother in the next Parliament.

Mr. Biffen: I note the fullhearted concern of my hon. Friend that the Criminal Justice Bill should receive Royal Assent, and I know that because of all the hard work that has gone into the drafting and debating of the Bill it is a view that must be echoed throughout this Chamber.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not extraordinary—I am sensitive to the legal position, Mr. Speaker—that, while the Attorney-General was willing to bring actions against the London *Daily News*, *The London Evening Standard* and *The Independent* newspapers, he failed to bring an action against ITN news, which repeated all the allegations in *The Independent* during the course of three bulletins on Monday, at 1 o'clock, 6 o'clock and 10 o'clock? Will the Leader of the House deny that Ministers met and, with the Attorney-General, took a decision that they would bring no action against ITN news because they were worried that they would have to stand the criticism of the British people that this was an attempt to censor ITN news?

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General the clear dissatisfaction that the hon. Gentleman entertains about his conduct.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): Can my right hon. Friend tell us when we might have a debate on the workings of the Child Care Act 1980? Is he aware of the Alice in Wonderland situation that obtains in Leicestershire over the workings of the Act, where, in 1983, as a result of the Lib-Lab pact, a secure house for unruly children was closed? Since then the local authority has laid down its own criteria, which, incredibly, means that the suspicion that somebody is likely to abscond is insufficient evidence for that person to be incarcerated? This has given rise to great concern by the courts and the police and has lead to unruly behaviour in other children's homes. May we have an early debate on this intolerable state of affairs?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the point that my hon. and learned Friend raises and the considerable local significance and topicality that it possesses. In the nearest future there is no prospect of such a debate in Government time, but I wish him every success in whatever other route he chooses to try to have the matter raised.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Since it has now become clear that the Prime Minister allowed the use of the Lakenheath base for the F111s to bomb Libya with the excuse that precision bombing was needed, was she aware that it was President Reagan's intention to kill Colonel Gaddafi? Since it has also now become clear from the evidence of the West German police that the bombing of the Berlin disco was not done by Libyan agents, when can we debate the Prime Minister's massive misjudgments before she leaves office?

Mr. Biffen: I say at once that I do not accept as a premise practically anything that the hon. Gentleman has said. As he requires a debate before the Prime Minister leaves office, that gives us plenty of time to consider his request.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire): Will my right hon. Friend please advise me what would be the best course of action if I explain to him that recently in my constituency a leaflet circulated by the alliance stated that the alliance team was pressing the Minister of Transport for urgent correspondence on the Ashbourne bypass? I asked a question of the Secretary of State for Transport some few weeks ago, in reply to which he said that six weeks after the alliance has put out this leaflet no representations had been made. It is more serious than that, because I challenged——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not the object of business questions. The hon. Member must ask for a statement, if not a debate.

Mr. McLoughlin: Mr. Speaker, I am coming to the important part. I got in touch with the Department of Transport about this very serious item and was told that no correspondence had been received. However, Mr. Speaker, after I wrote——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with me. The hon. Gentleman must address his question to the Leader of the House and make it relevant to next week's business.

Mr. McLoughlin: I should like the Leader of the House to investigate my claim that I asked the Minister about this and that he responded that no correspondence had been received. After I had raised the item locally, a letter arrived at the Department of Transport dated 13 April, but postmarked 28 April. Will the Leader of the House investigate how this letter got lost in the Department for two weeks?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has asked me a question that implies a responsibility that I am sure I do not possess. There is only a modest ministerial responsibility on any point in this matter. My hon. Friend has to remember that when confronted by this unseemly and unwholesome performance of his political opponents in West Derbyshire he played the dirtiest trick of all time when he won the by-election, when they were so confident that they would win it.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In view of the no less unwholesome performance of the Prime Minister over the question of the Law Officers' letter on Westland, and in the light of the fact that question 2 to the Prime Minister has been on the Order Paper for over three weeks and that I had the courtesy on 12 April to set out a whole range of questions that might be asked, if the Prime Minister will not answer, will the Leader of the House ask the Attorney-General to come and tell us whether it is true that he confronted the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong, saying that he would bring the police from New Scotland Yard to No. 10 if the Prime Minister did not agree to an inquiry? It is a question of fact, nothing else. It is simply a factual question that has been on the Order Paper for more than three weeks. In view of the seriousness of the television programme, does that not deserve an answer?

Will the Leader of the House go and commune, or whatever he does, with the Lord Privy Seal, and ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to answer the question that I put on Monday, which the Lord Privy Seal said he would refer to the Scottish Office, about his knowledge of the raid on the BBC in Glasgow?

Mr. Biffen: On the first point, the hon. Gentleman argues that he has tabled a question and is not entirely happy with the answer. That is hardly surprising, as he puts down a great many questions. Even those of us who are far less devoted to Question Time frequently have the experience of not being entirely satisfied with an answer. As a consequence of that, the hon. Gentleman asks whether I will see that a question is put to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. The hon. Gentleman has made the request, and I shall see what can be done. However, it is perfectly within the hon. Gentleman's competence—he is not exactly a novice in these matters—to table a question to the Attorney-General.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point concerning the Scottish Office and the answer that I gave on Monday, I shall look into the matter.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Was my right hon. Friend present earlier when the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) did not make the slightest effort to refute, either in whole or in part, the figure of £36 billion as the cost of implementing Labour party pledges? Does he not think that the time is fast becoming ripe for a debate on the implications to the individual ordinary taxpayer of that figure? Would not such a debate also provide an opportunity for the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party to tell us what their policies are and what the cost of them would be?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a valid political point. My only regret is that I have to be rather sparing in my response because of the problem of Government time. However, there are some hours ahead of us today devoted to the Finance Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to make some of those points at greater length during that time.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I am sure that everybody in the House is concerned about the terrible pictures coming out of Mozambique showing men, women and children dying in their thousands. There ought to be a statement on the situation in Mozambique, including what further assistance can be given by the Government, particularly towards implementing sanctions against South Africa to stop it attacking its neighbours in that terrible way.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Lady has made a request that there should be a statement on what is undoubtedly a great human tragedy in Mozambique, and I shall convey that request to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Can my right hon. Friend say whether he has received any request from the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) to make a statement about his answer in 1977 relating to the allegations in the Peter Wright book?

Mr. Biffen: I have had no communication with the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Leader of the House not recognise that there is a great deal of pressure and a wish, certainly from Opposition Members, that a statement should be made on the allegation that up to 30 MI5 officers were involved in subversion and treachery? If a Government profess themselves to be in

[Mr. David Winnick]

favour of the rule of law and parliamentary democracy, how can they take such a dismissive attitude about such allegations? Will there be a statement next week?

On the matter regarding Waldheim, has the Leader of the House seen my early-day motion 921—

[That this House welcomes the decision by the United States and Canadian authorities that Kurt Waldheim will not be permitted to visit privately their countries; trusts that the same decision will be reached by the United Kingdom Government; believes that all those held responsible for participating in Nazi crimes against humanity should continue to be brought to justice; and expresses its sorrow that someone with Waldheim's war-time record should actually be President of Austria.]

—regarding this scoundrel?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw that word. It is not in accordance with our conventions. He took the right course yesterday in putting down a motion. That is the right way of dealing with such matters.

Mr. Winnick: I always obey your wishes, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the man is a scoundrel. If I am not allowed to say so in the House because of the rules, obviously I shall withdraw the word, but only in so far as the Chamber is concerned.

Mr. Biffen: As to the first point that the hon. Gentleman raised, the Government's position has been made clear, not least by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I have nothing further to say. As to the second point, I cannot helpfully add to what I have said to other hon. Members on the matter of Mr. Waldheim and the newspaper reports. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Despite the entreaties of my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis) that the House should be kept sitting well into the summer to deal with the Criminal Justice Bill, does my right hon. Friend agree with me and many others that this Parliament has virtually reached the end of its natural life? In view of the abysmal attendance last night and, no doubt, tonight on the Finance Bill, and the early rising of the House, will he convey to our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister the feeling of hon. Members on both sides that the time has come to go to the country and secure a third term for the Government?

Mr. Biffen: That question does not helpfully require a reply. I have heard what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am not so sure that the Leader of the House is anxious to have an early election, in view of what was stated in one of the newspapers recently, that if the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) got back into power one of the first people to get the chop will be the Leader of the House, apparently because some time ago he made a statement about a balanced programme.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Again I say that this is not the purpose of business questions. The purpose is to deal with business for next week.

Mr. Skinner: It was just a preamble to what I am about to say, Mr. Speaker.

Picking up the debate as it went along, will the Leader of the House consider the possibility of having a debate, at this fairly late stage, on the MI5 destabilisation allegations of the Wilson and Callaghan Governments? Perhaps it will provide a wonderful opportunity for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the time, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) to come to the Chamber and take part in the debate and tell us who was protected and why.

Mr. Biffen: First, in respect of the preamble to the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I am grateful for the character reference. As to the second and more substantial point that he made, I cannot do more than refer the hon. Gentleman to what I said to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): In view of events yesterday in Walworth road and the almost certainty that, after any election, some hon. Members will seek to represent sections of the community rather than the community and constituents as a whole, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate next week to discuss the procedures of the House in the future, and particularly how individual Opposition Members can be protected against their own leader, in case what happened at Walworth road yesterday is repeated?

Mr. Biffen: The relationship between Walworth road and the procedures of the House is absolutely fascinating. I do not wish to make any comment that would add to the difficulties. Therefore, my hon. Friend should release us all from the difficulties by rendering his advice direct to the Procedure Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be good for the House if we get on to the Finance Bill quite soon. I shall call hon. Members who have been rising. Questions should relate to the business for next week.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week for a debate in view of the distorted statements made last Saturday at the Nottinghamshire Federation of British Coal Tenants conference by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) against Conservative Members, British Coal and the Government?

Mr. Biffen: It is an extremely good subject. With all my heart I wish that I could offer Government time next week, but I fear that pressures are such that I cannot do so, I shall certainly bear it in mind for the future.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As part of the Labour party's smear-a-day campaign, apparently the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is putting it about that Airey Neave plotted with MI5 to bump him off. The right hon. Gentleman is useful to us. Is the right hon. Gentleman not of more use to us alive than dead?

Mr. Biffen: I was not aware of such exotic developments in the national debate. Therefore, I do not think that I can make an adequate reply, except that I suppose that if I hang around I shall hear much more of the same.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): May we have a debate on the Abortion Act 1967, which celebrates its 19th birthday this week, under which 2.5

million innocents have lost their lives? In particular, may we have a debate on clause 1 of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, which makes it an offence to kill any child who is capable of being born alive? In the light of recent research, which shows that about 70 per cent. of foetuses of 22 weeks gestational age are survivors, the whole country would welcome such a debate.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Support my Bill.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend said. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), said that he has a Bill that will aid in this matter. The topic is possibly more appropriate for private Members' initiatives than those of the Government. In any case, Government time in the near future is simply not available. I shall, as ever, look with benevolence upon what my hon. Friend requires.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate on the report by Sir Gordon Downey, the Auditor-General, on the £87 million overpayment of benefit? Does he agree that it is totally unacceptable at this time for so much money to be paid out? Perhaps it might be understandable when many civil servants are putting their own financial interests ahead of national interests by going on strike and taking industrial action, particularly members of the Civil and Public Services Association and the Society of Civil and Public Servants? Is he aware that my constituents in Leicester, East will suffer on 11 May unless the strike is ended quickly? People in need of important benefit will certainly not get it because, unfortunately, civil servants care more about their own money than about my constituents.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend has said. I was not absolutely clear, but I got the impression that he referred to evidence contained in the Public Accounts Committee report. I assure him that plans are afoot to have the Public Accounts Committee's report debated in the reasonably near future.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the United States Patent Office has recently authorised the patenting of animal genetic engineering? Is he further aware that an official within that department acknowledged that it would be likely to, or could, lead to human genetic engineering? It represents a severe danger to the future of mankind of a nature equivalent to the nuclear debate that has been going on for the past 30 years. Will my right hon. Friend be good enough to ask the appropriate Minister to authorise a debate on the matter to ensure that we do not go down this line, particularly as during the last week the European Patent Office has received two animal genetic engineering patent applications, which is an inevitable first step towards moving the goalposts down such an extremely dangerous and slippery path?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend, in a compelling way, requests a debate that would widen a little further the request that I have already had for debates on the topic of abortion and like matters. I have explained why I do not think that such matters are particularly suitable for Government initiatives. I shall bear in mind what he had to say. I recognise that there is a real desire in the House that such matters should be debated, particularly ahead of any legislation that might eventually be brought before it.

Later——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A short time ago the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) made a comment to the Leader of the House. His comment would not stand up in a court of law. The hon. Member was not even there. I was there and I am defending my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). The hon. Member for Sherwood made comments, but he was not even there. It was pure supposition on his part. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that both hon. Members have now had fair shares. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) did not raise that point with the Leader of the House. I am afraid that I was not there either.

Members (Medical Checks)

4.9 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, an exhibition has been taking place this week in the Upper Waiting Hall and it has been organised by the Family Heart Association. It has been providing a useful service checking Members' cholesterol levels, some of which have worried some hon. Members. I am sure that you will agree that, while that proves the point, made several times in the House, that there ought to be more frequent mobile screening of this kind available in the House, not only for Members but for others who work in the House, the results obtained ought to be confidential medical information.

I have some evidence that a Lobby correspondent has been compiling a list of Members' cholesterol levels. I do not know what he intends to do with that list but it is a serious matter, particularly as Lobby correspondents are able to move freely about the House. That Lobby correspondents should be standing by the screen and checking Members' cholestoral levels as an hon. Member is sitting in a chair waiting for the result is extremely undesirable. Will you inquire into this matter Mr. Speaker?

The Lobby correspondent concerned is a Mr. Mike Steele and I saw him with a list. The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) spoke to him yesterday about the list and asked him what use he meant to make of it. That kind of information ought to be private to hon. Members and ought not to be used now or in the future by Lobby correspondents. There is a possibility that the information has already been used, but I ask you to inquire into this matter and to report to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Lady for raising that matter. I shall certainly look into it.

Parliamentary Conduct

4.12 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My concern is for the honour of hon. Members and for the way in which our business is conducted. For that reason I turn to you, Mr. Speaker, as the protector and custodian in such matters. I should like to raise the matter of an occurrence during business questions.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that the microphones are switched on in specific locations, depending on the hon. Member who is on his feet. Within the immediate location of a live microphone an hon. Member from a sedentary position used the first name of a very prominent and internationally known member of a party of which I am not a member, and was heard to attribute to that name the epithet "mass murderer". Is such a practice in order? That remark might be broadcast on newscasts later today. If that is in order, can you tell me, Mr. Speaker, whether I am allowed to use the first name of the Member who made the allegation and call him a liar?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) is referring to the episode about the President of Austria.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No. If it was a reference to an hon. Member of this House, it was totally out of order. These microphones are tuned into my Chair. I hear clearly the hon. Member who has been called to speak, because that is the object of the microphones. I frequently do not hear things that are said at the far end of the Chamber, and perhaps that is just as well. I certainly deprecate any epithet of that kind from any hon. Member.

Mr. Cook: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be right for me to ask you, as custodian and protector of the honour of the House, to ask the hon. Member to withdraw that statement? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not hear it, so I cannot ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. Cook: It was the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton).

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can hardly believe that an hon. Member would use a phrase of that kind.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Ordered,

That the Teesside Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. — *[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

(Clauses 11, 18, 20 to 23, 33, 45, 147 and 160 and Schedule 4)

Considered in Committee. [Progress 29 April.]

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Clause 11

ACCOUNTING FOR AND PAYMENT OF TAX

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

4.18 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): The story that leads to this clause begins most directly with the VAT small business review that was published on 24 October last year. The proposals in the consultation document followed a wide-ranging view of the VAT policy towards small businesses to see whether special arrangements could be provided for them. The review was announced in the White Paper entitled "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers".

A major concern expressed by small businesses and often expressed to me directly in letters from hon. Members enclosing correspondence from constituents, is that they often have to pay VAT to Customs and Excise before they are paid by their customers, who frequently take long periods of credit. A further concern was that they were obliged to complete and pay four VAT returns a year and would prefer a system more akin to that for other bills, such as the rates, with regular advance payments.

The changes proposed will overcome these problems by helping with cash flow and budgeting, and thus ease the VAT burden on small businesses. The consultation exercise that the Government asked Customs and Excise to conduct last October was wide-ranging. Not only were responses received to the consultative document from 192 trade bodies and individuals, but the views of small business were canvassed directly. A question and answer leaflet was sent to 5,000 randomly selected small businesses and 1,256 were completed and returned. The consultative document and leaflet contained a package of proposals targeted specifically at assisting the small business and included a scheme for cash accounting and a scheme for annual accounting.

The overwhelming majority of respondents welcomed the small business review and, in particular, the proposals for these schemes. There were, and this is the purpose of consultation, suggestions for change to the proposals for both schemes. The most important of these was about the higher limit to allow more businesses to use the scheme and that in itself was a commendation for the principle of the schemes. Other suggestions concerned the detailed operation of the schemes. All these suggestions were carefully considered by the Government and many have been accepted in whole or in part. The result was the Chancellor's announcement in his Budget statement about the introduction of schemes for cash accounting and annual accounting.

Clause 11 provides the enabling provision for regulations to be made covering the cash accounting and annual accounting schemes. The scheme for cash accounting will give a small business the option of accounting for VAT when it receives payment rather than when it issues a tax invoice. This will give automatic bad debt relief to businesses using the scheme. Similarly, it will be able to reclaim the VAT that it has incurred on its purchases only when it make payment rather than when it receives a tax invoice. Under annual accounting a small business will have the further option of making one VAT return a year rather than four as at present. Businesses choosing to use that option would make nine payments by direct debit on account and a tenth balancing payment would be made with the annual return.

This enabling clause tells the House little about how the scheme will work, and the conditions for their use. Those details will be contained in the regulations. As I said on 8 April in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), the regulations for cash accounting will not be made until the necessary Community derogation has been approved. A draft of the proposed regulations has been placed in the Library and copies have been sent to trade bodies. The regulations for annual accounting will not be made until next spring and again a draft will be sent to trade bodies before they are made.

As the Chancellor announced in his Budget statement, the schemes will be open to businesses with an annual turnover not exceeding £250,000. That represents a considerable advance on the £100,000 which was originally proposed in the consultative document last October, and covers over half of all the businesses that are registered for VAT. Once admitted to use either scheme, a business will not normally be required to leave until its turnover has exceeded the limit by 25 per cent. to a figure of £312,500 in a year.

Cash accounting will be available to businesses registering for VAT, as well as for existing registered businesses, but for annual accounting a business must have been registered for at least one year. The regulations will also detail the other conditions to be satisfied for Customs and Excise to give approval to use the schemes and the circumstances in which use of the schemes may be withdrawn. Refusal to use a scheme, or the withdrawal of an approval, would be appealable to the independent value added tax tribunal. The regulations will state the procedures to be used by a business on entry, while using, and on ceasing to use, a scheme, and will be framed to take account, in whole or part, of many of the representations received. Those for cash accounting especially meet the points that have been made about leaving the scheme and receipted invoices.

Subject to the necessary derogation from the Community, cash accounting will start on 1 October 1987. Annual accounting will start in the summer of 1988 when the necessary computer reprogramming has been completed. Broad details of the scheme will be available from local VAT offices at the end of May. Further information will be contained in a leaflet that will be sent to all businesses with the July, August and September VAT returns.

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

A business wishing to receive the public notice, which will give the conditions for joining and using the scheme, will be able to return a tear-off slip to its local VAT office. A business wishing to join, having read the public notice, should complete and return to the VAT office the application form which will be part of the notice. Provided that the conditions are satisfied, approval will be given to use cash accounting from the beginning of the business's net VAT accounting period, on or after 1 October.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I welcome the concept behind this scheme, for which I have argued for many years. However, will the Minister explain to the House why the current system was built in the way it was? What was the justification for the existing system? Historically what arguments have been deployed against the arrangements that he now seeks to introduce?

Mr. Brooke: That question goes back into history a little. The legislation was introduced originally in 1973. At that stage neither the hon. Gentleman nor myself were Members of the House. In those days I was not in the habit of reading *Hansard* to see what was happening in a body of which I was not a Member. However, I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome for the legislation, in which he is joined by many other people in the country who feel that it is a good development.

Although the scheme for annual accounting is not being introduced until the summer of 1988, information will be available on a broadly similar time scale. An information sheet will be available in local VAT offices at the end of May, and a public notice, including a tear-off application form, containing the conditions for using the scheme, will be available after Royal Assent. The cost of cash accounting is a once-and-for-all loss of about £100 million, with on-going annual costs of £10 million. The revenue cost of annual accounting is broadly neutral.

I should report to the Committee on the Community derogation, about which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor spoke in the Budget debate. For cash accounting, the Government acted urgently on Budget day by lodging with the Commission of the Community a formal request for the necessary legal derogation, with the proposed operative date of 1 October 1987. There has been no suggestion that the Commission sees any significant difficulties with the proposal and the Government are optimistic that it will take the next step of formally notifying other member states shortly. If, within two months of that notification, neither the Commission nor any member state requests that the matter be raised by the Council, the approval will have been obtained.

In summary, there are rare occasions in ministerial life when one can lay proposals before the Committee which enjoy widespread and even possibly universal approval.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Now that the Minister has dealt with the details, perhaps I can ask him just one detailed question that he might care to answer. It concerns those people who opt to take cash accounting and, for some reason, have one year with a very high turnover, which is different from their normal expectations. Would those people automatically go out of the scheme, or would there be some discretion? The Minister seemed to suggest the possibility of some discretion.

Mr. Brooke: It may help the right hon. Gentleman if I state what is contained in the regulations in that regard. The draft regulations have been placed in the Library. The regulations state:

"(2) A person admitted to the scheme shall remain in it for a minimum of two years, unless:

(a) at the end of any quarter or prescribed accounting period his turnover in the year then ended has exceeded by 25 per cent. the figure of £250,000 and in the year then beginning is expected to exceed the figure of £250,000, in which case he shall notify the Commissioners and leave at the anniversary of his joining; or

(b) if at any time there is reason to believe that his turnover in the year ahead will exceed by 25 per cent. the figure of £250,000 in which case he shall notify the Commissioners who may require him to leave the scheme at the end of the next accounting period."

Clearly, if he goes above £312,500, and is not expecting to come below it again and to go back to the original figure, he has that freedom. I repeat that the regulations state:

"in the year then beginning is expected to exceed the figure of £250,000".

Under those circumstances, he would have to leave the scheme. However, if he expected his turnover to go back below £250,000, he could remain within it.

In summary, as I was saying, there are rare occasions when one can lay proposals before the Committee of the House, which enjoy widespread or, even possibly, universal approval. Those outside bodies that approved the original principle of cash accounting in the consultative document have a fortiori applauded the extension and expansion of that principle that was made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget. In particular, small business federations, institutions, organisations and lobbies have been generous in their praise of my right hon. Friend's imaginativeness and helpfulness.

Those of us who have run small businesses and been responsible for payrolls and answerable for profits, and who have run them for enough years to have had to have lived with the consequences of our actions, and who have had the time to experience both the downs and ups of what the textbooks of one's youth called the "business cycle", know just how significant and beneficial for small businesses is the change to cash accounting for VAT.

I have been heartened that my hon. Friends, who follow this scene closely and who have done so much in an informed and reasoned way to advance the small business cause, have been so enthusiastic about the difference that the schemes will make. As they know, anything that makes life simpler for small businesses is potentially good for jobs. Such knowledge of how a small business works was not shared by Opposition Members who, in a purblind way, said that there was nothing in the Budget for the unemployed, in bright and blissful ignorance of how 1 million jobs have been created in the economy during the past four years, and by whom.

The measured reaction of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), 24 hours after the Budget, when he demonstrated total confusion between cash accounting and partial exemption, suggests that Opposition Members do not understand VAT either. The preternatural interest that Opposition Members have latterly been taking in the subject of VAT might usefully have been taken earlier in the interests of good opposition. I appreciate that cash accounting and partial exemption

are complicated and esoteric subjects, difficult to grasp readily, but it is as well for this country that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, will never have to grasp them in government.

Apart from the trumpet's uncertain sound from the Opposition, these provisions have been widely welcomed by the rest of the nation, and I commend them to the Committee.

4.30 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I think that the Minister may regret his peroration when we come to deal with partial exemption later in our debates. We shall be putting certain matters to him that will demonstrate an adequate grasp of the difference between partial exemption and cash accounting.

Clause 11 has a history that goes back beyond the VAT review for small businesses, which was published in October 1986. When considering the Finance Bill of 1985, in a debate on cash accounting initiated by the Opposition, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spoke eloquently in favour of it. At that time Ministers were much less certain about the benefits of cash accounting. It would seem that the reason for their change in outlook between 1985 and now is the draft 22nd directive from the EEC Commission. That draft directive asked for cash accounting for small businesses, and it was following its publication that for the first time there was a VAT review for small businesses, which called also for cash accounting.

It is correct, as the Minister has said, that the Commission suggested a limit of £100,000 on the turnover of small businesses, which the Government have upped to £250,000. We welcome the clause and the uplift, and we shall be supporting the clause because of the help that it gives to small businesses. However, certain specific questions arise from the manner in which the Government have introduced the clause, and these I shall put to the Minister.

First, will the Minister tell me how many firms will be involved in cash accounting? How many, potentially, which have a turnover of less than £250,000, could opt for it? I should like to know also how many firms have turnovers of more than £100,000 but less than £250,000? In other words, how many firms will be affected by the Government's uplift of the EEC's recommendation?

Secondly, the Minister has said that on Budget day the Government made an application to the Commission for derogation from the sixth directive. Will he confirm that and tell me when he expects the derogation to arise? Until the EEC has given permission for there to be a derogation from the sixth directive, the change to the VAT rules in clause 11 and the regulations promulgated under it cannot take effect.

Thirdly, will the Minister tell me whether he expects any difficulties with the Commission arising from the different limit on turnover that has been recommended by the Government as opposed to the EEC?

Fourthly, will he tell me how a loss in VAT revenue will arise at the end of the first year of the implementation of the system of about £100 million and only £10 million thereafter? I am sure that there is an adequate explanation, and it is as well that we are aware of it when we are debating a system that involves such large sums for the Revenue.

Finally, now that the Minister has acceded to the pressure that came as much from the Opposition Benches as from the Government Benches for cash accounting for small businesses, is he prepared to accede to the request that came last year and the year before that for some power of mitigation within the new system of VAT penalties? There is much concern among small businesses on this score. I shall be grateful if the Minister will respond to that and to my other questions, bearing in mind our welcome for the clause overall.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Minister was right to say that the proposals have been welcomed by Conservative Members, by the Opposition and by alliance Members. I know that the implications of cash accounting for bad debts will be welcomed by many small businesses. The downturn in North sea oil activity, for example, has led to an embarrassing amount of bad debt, and the VAT implications have been potentially quite serious.

It is right that the clause should be welcomed, but I should like to know why, when representations were being made on behalf of individual companies that were facing difficulties—I do not wish to be churlish—it was not possible to say that the change would be introduced at the earliest opportunity. Like the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), I am puzzled by the delay that has taken place in introducing it, but it is only right that it should be welcomed.

I should like to know also whether, in interpreting the regulations, any distinction will be drawn between the balances of businesses opting for cash accounting or annual accounting. Depending on the sector in which a business operates, it is possible for a business mostly to recover VAT. I trust that that will still be allowed and that there will be even greater advantages for businesses that essentially recover VAT. The ability to recover it at an earlier stage will be beneficial to cash flow. It will be helpful if the Minister will make clear that no distinction will be drawn.

The questions that I would have asked about cash accounting have essentially been asked and dealt with, and I merely say that in this context there is likely to be a welcome benefit for small businesses. Much more radical reforms of VAT could still be introduced. First, the overall threshold could be raised to a much higher level. Secondly, we should explore the possibility of abolishing VAT on inter-business transfers. Such a step would radically simplify the administration of the system. Administrative burdens are a major problem for small businesses.

In response to the Minister's attack on those who occupy the Opposition Benches, I wish to say that before I was elected to the House of Commons I was involved in running small businesses on behalf of others, and once on my own account. I am well aware of the real practical problems that are faced by a business that employs two or three people when it has to administer and handle VAT. The simpler the administration can be made, the more a business can concentrate on making and selling its products or services. I hope that the Minister, satisfied though he may be that this measure has widespread support, will not let up and will pursue further every way possible of simplifying the administration and lifting the burden that falls on small businesses. None the less, the measures that are before us are welcome and will be helpful.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has asked a number of questions which I shall do my best to answer. First, he asked how many firms would be involved that would normally be within the threshold of £250,000. The answer is 840,000 out of a total of 1·49 million VAT traders.

The hon. Gentleman went on to ask me how many I thought were likely to take up the new system. That is to some extent a conjectural question until there is a take-up, but there had to be a calculation to ascertain the cost tht would be incurred as a result of introducing the system. After we have eliminated the repayment traders, to whom I shall return in response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), and those governed by the retail trading scheme, which effectively have had similar benefits historically, we are left with about 300,000 traders who are potential candidates for the scheme. We are expecting that about 200,000 traders will take advantage of the scheme.

That is our best estimate. The hon. Member for Sedgefield asked me for percentages. My recollection is that the limit of £250,000 involved just under 65 per cent. of all traders—that is, 840,000 against the total—and that 44 per cent. of all traders—in other words, about 660,000 — were involved in terms of the original £100,000 limit.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Government sought and applied for a derogation on Budget day. I said so in my introductory remarks, and added that we were encouraged to believe that there had been no suggestion that the Commission saw any significant difficulties with the proposal. That includes the proposal of the new limit that we have set.

The Government are optimistic that the next step of formally notifying other member states will be taken very shortly. If within two months no member state or the Commission requests that the matter be raised by the Council, automatically the approval will have been obtained. Assuming that the Commission circulates it in the near future, we are looking to early July when we might expect, assuming all goes well, that the derogation had been obtained.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield asked about the cost of £100 million in the first year and £10 million in subsequent years. The cost is effectively a cash flow cost, because all we are doing is delaying the taking in of the money. On the figures that I quoted, we estimate that in the first year, when the main bulk of traders will come into the scheme, we shall defer about £100 million of revenue into subsequent years. In subsequent years new traders, and other traders who did not register in the first year, will come in. We will lose some bad debt money because bad debt relief will be furnished through this scheme in the way that I suggested.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked about mitigation. I have confirmed on many occasions, and my right hon. and hon. Friends have likewise confirmed, that the working of the penalty and surcharge regime will be reviewed in advance of the 1988 Budget, in the light of a decent span of experience. The scheme will be examined and, assuming my right hon. Friend the Chancellor brings in the 1988 Budget, we will report on the result of that review.

The hon. Member for Gordon asked whether the repayment would be better for those engaged in cash accounting or annual accounting. The cash accounting principle will apply when traders making returns pay their bills, as well as when they receive money. In the normal course of events, it will not be of interest to repayment traders because they have the advantage of earlier payment or earlier receipt of money under the present arrangement. Repayment traders would normally not be part of the annual accounting scheme because they would be advancing money even earlier than it would normally be received. The regulations for annual accounting will not come out until the spring of next year, but we do not envisage that repayment traders will be included in them.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) intervened to ask about the history. I have not been able to receive advice on the detailed debate in 1972, but there is no evidence that cash accounting was a strong runner at that time. I was not a member of the Finance Bill Standing Committee in 1985, so I am grateful to the hon. Member for Sedgefield for having described the contribution of the hon. Member for Workington. It sounds as though cash accounting was a late runner in the stakes, rather than running the whole time.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I rise to intervene because this is one of a number of initiatives that I have been asking to have reformed since I was elected in 1979. I hope that the Minister will ensure that small businesses understand the effect of this clause. It will mean that instead of delaying invoices—as invariably small businesses do to avoid making substantial payments in a particular quarter—if there is a sudden blip in their supply arrangements, they will be able more efficiently and accurately to keep records and send invoices in the knowledge that they will not be affected in the way they previously would have been.

I remember very well that, on occasions, one delayed invoices because one was concerned that substantial debt to the Exchequer would be incurred because of the rules as they existed in the early 1970s. It is important that small businesses get the message clearly that, if they use this system correctly, it will benefit them substantially.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 147

REDUCED RATES OF TAX

4.45 pm

Mr. Bruce: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 96, line 5, leave out lines 6 to 14 and insert:—

'Table of Rates of Tax

Portion of Value *Lower limit £*	*Upper limit £*	*Rate of Tax per cent.*
0	80,000	Nil
80,000	130,000	30
130,000	190,000	40
190,000	317,000	50
317,000	—	60'.

The Minister will not be surprised to hear that I had not expected to be on my feet quite so early. for reasons which I cannot fathom, we seem to be getting through this Bill at a faster rate than has been the case in previous years. No doubt others will have some speculative reasons as to why that is happening. This amendment—I make no apology for this—is tabled in a constructive spirit. We

contend that the Government have—leaving aside the philosophical argument for and against tax cuts and how those tax cuts should be applied—cut taxes at the top end of the scale more substantially than at the lower end. They have increased net payable taxes at the bottom end of the scale.

This amendment aims to modify the Government's enthusiasm for cutting taxes on inheritance, which have been reduced substantially in recent years and will yield in the current financial year about one third of the yield 60 years ago. No doubt the Conservative Government regard that as a great triumph of change, but it is a switch which is regrettable. The amendment represents a substantial uplift on the current level. The reason for that, rather than a straight indexation of the rates, is that we have taken on board the argument put forward about the increase in house prices. Houses are the single source of most people's wealth. This is a constructive amendment, which we hope Government Members will see in that light.

It may be appropriate to return to the wider argument, if we debate the question that the clause stand part, when I could elaborate on the alliance's view of how inheritance taxes and gift taxes should be developed. At this stage I rest the argument on the contention that the right thing to do is to modify the relief the Government are proposing and to target that relief at the other end of the scale, so that under our proposals people with moderate estates—I believe that is the Government's stated objective—will benefit more than those with larger estates. That is a reasonable objective.

I have been somewhat surprised on the occasions when, either as a witness or a participant in the debate, I have heard Ministers argue about the burden of taxation on the low paid and those of relatively modest means and use that argument to describe the imbalance and to justify tax relief at the opposite end of the scale or right across the board. If the Government really are concerned about reducing the tax burden on people of modest means, they should be thinking in terms of limiting the relief that they are giving to people on higher incomes and targeting it to those at lower levels.

This is a modest amendment which is put forward in a constructive spirit. It seeks, as I said at the outset, slightly to modify the Government's enthusiasm in this direction, and we hope that it will be considered in that light.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has put me in a little difficulty because he said that he would explain his party's wider views on inheritance tax and so on, in the clause stand part debate. Since his amendment simply proposes an alternative scale, and, therefore, we are talking about inheritance tax, it is much better for me to explain the clause and to deal with the amendment at one and the same time. The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity in a later debate or in this debate to make his other remarks, but it would be more sensible for me to make one contribution.

Let me start with the actual rates to which the amendment is proposing changes—that is to say, what is in clause 147. In 1979 we came to office committed to drawing the teeth of the capital transfer tax introduced by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). The combination of rampant inflation and the failure to index the starting point had meant that by 1979 capital transfer tax was a penal tax.

In 1980 we doubled the threshold for CTT. In 1981 we reduced the rate of tax on lifetime gifts. In 1982 we introduced the requirement to index the thresholds—to follow the income tax example—to avoid a repetition of the 1970s experience. In 1984 we reduced the death rate and made the rate on all lifetime gifts half the death rate. In 1986, in last year's Finance Act, we made a major reform—the abolition of CTT on lifetime gifts. It was then that the tax was renamed inheritance tax. That measure was widely welcomed as being of great help to those seeking to pass on to the next generation firms and farms that they had built up.

Our intention this year is rather different, but equally important. Since 1979 our policies have encouraged a large expansion in the owner-occupation of housing and the trebling of private direct share ownership. More and more people now own property—houses, shares, and so on—that they will wish to pass on to their children. If no action is taken, more and more of those modest estates will be brought into inheritance tax liability. The purpose of the clause is to take many of those small estates out of inheritance tax altogether and significantly to reduce the charge on the others.

Clause 147 increases the starting point for inheritance tax from £71,000, as it was up until this point, to £90,000. That is an increase of 27 per cent. Had we simply indexed that starting point, it would be £74,000. The result of this substantial increase is to reduce the number of estates paying inheritance tax this year by about one third, or some 12,000 estates in all, compared with the number that would be paying tax with indexation.

The new scale produces reductions in inheritance tax liabilities at all levels. The four point scale—replacing the present seven point scale—is in itself a welcome simplification. But—I make this point again—the largest reductions are concentrated at the lowest end. An estate of £100,000 will see its tax bill reduced by some 60 per cent. The estate of around £1 million will see only a 3 per cent. reduction in its tax bill. As with the income tax changes which we debated yesterday, we have deliberately skewed the changes to give maximum benefit at the lower end.

The amendment is another example of the confusion that the alliance sometimes gets into in the way in which it approaches such matters. It is either that or it is an example of the alliance's neither-one-thing-nor-the-other approach or split-the-difference approach to policy. Or perhaps the alliance does not know what it is about. From the way in which the hon. Gentleman moved the amendment, I am not sure whether he knows what it is about.

It is true that the effect of the amendment is to increase the burden of inheritance tax, but it would reduce the starting point from £90,000 to £80,000. The effect would be to make 7,000 more estates liable for inheritance tax than would be the case under our proposal. That is why I was astonished to hear the hon. Gentleman say that those with modest estates would benefit more under his proposals than ours. The reverse is true.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): The Chief Secretary is being a little unkind. He will have noted that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said that the debate had began too early. He obviously had not had time to work out the policy. The Chief Secretary should be a little more generous in his remarks.

Mr. MacGregor: I think that the hon. Lady is right. We were told yesterday that the Liberals and Social Democrats needed a little more time to work out their income tax proposals and what they were going to do following the vote last night. Clearly, they have lacked the time to put forward this amendment, because they have got it wrong.

Not only does the amendment show confusion, but it underlines the difference between our parties. The Social Democrats and Liberals want to see more people paying inheritance tax. Moreover, their proposals would cause the greatest relative increase to those to whom we are giving the maximum benefit. Rather than impose the greatest additional charge on the largest estates, the Social Democrats' and Liberals' proposals would place the greatest additional charge on those at the lower end and that is completely alien to the spirit of our proposals. Therefore, I am sure that he will not be surprised to hear that we prefer our clause to his amendment and I would certainly urge my hon. Friends to oppose it.

Nor are the Social Democrats' and Liberals' proposals necessary to protect the yield of tax. Even after the changes that we are proposing, we are still expecting a yield of about £1,100 million in inheritance tax next year, well above the expected yield in 1986-87. That illustrates yet again the point that the Opposition parties have so often failed to grasp—that lower tax rates do not necessarily mean lower tax yields if they are underpinned by a buoyant and flourishing economy. Indeed, even more to the point, if, as has been happening under the Government, they help to bring about such an economy, that is very much their effect.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there any connection between these substantial reductions in capital transfer tax, and, indeed, inheritance tax, over the past seven years, and the £110,000 million which has been shipped abroad in investment overseas since 1979? Is there a connection between the great collapse in taxation for rich people in society and the vast amount of money that has run away and been frittered away overseas?

Mr. MacGregor: There has not been a great collapse in taxation on the richest people. What has been done, and rightly, is that we have reduced the rates of income tax from the absurdly high levels that existed under the Labour Government and so given incentives and encouragement to people to earn more. We have also made some changes in other areas such as investment income surcharge, I believe correctly. I see no parallel between the changes that we have made and the fact that we have been so successful in building up overseas assets. That is due to a completely different set of circumstances.

Because Britain is so much better off under this Government than under the Labour Government, despite all the alleviations that we have introduced in CTT, and now inheritance tax, the yield of the tax will be almost 50 per cent. higher next year that it was in 1978-79. It is a favourite cry of Labour Chancellors and Shadow Chancellors that they will tax and tax until the pips squeak, but that demonstrates that squeaking pips do not produce money for the Exchequer. A resurgent economy based on widely distributed wealth does.

The amendment will be welcomed by all those who believe in a capital and property-owning democracy. As I have said so often before in the House, tht is what we are constantly and increasingly achieving by increasing wealth and savings and by spreading it to ever wider numbers of the British people. The sale of council houses is but one of the many ways in which that is being achieved. For those who benefit from the sale of council houses, certainly in a generation to come, they will have a profound effect in bringing in financial and other assets and giving the opportunity of financial independence to millions more families. The proposal embodied in the clause enables us to take a further step in that direction.

I believe that the proposals will be welcomed by all who believe in the importance of encouraging the creation of wealth, rather than the vain attempt to use the tax system to achieve a redistribution of wealth that is inimical to its creation. They will be welcomed by those who think that it is a healthy development that more and more people, lower down the income scale than ever before, will be able to leave property to their children, and to enable them in turn to enjoy the independence that property ownership can bring. The proposals are a further modest contribution to our wider objectives, and as such I commend them to the Committee.

5 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Nothing illustrates more clearly the confusion of thought in the minds of members of the Social Democratic party than the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary pointed out, the effect of the amendment is precisely the opposite to the intention that the hon. Gentleman explained to us. If we accepted it, we should penalise the least well off. It is quite extraordinary that the Social Democratic party should bring such an ill-thought-out, ill-considered proposal before the Committee. Mercifully, however, there is no prospect whatever of the amendment being accepted.

My right hon. Friend made another important point. The whole philosophy of the Government, rightly, is to reduce the burden of taxation on the British people. A major cause of the modest economic performance of this country since 1945 has been the burden of taxation. However, there is still too much of a guilt complex about reducing taxation, which some people think is somehow immoral. I make the opposite assertion. I say that high taxation is immoral, and that it has been a dead hand on the economic performance of the country. Now we are beginning to see that, as my right hon. Friend so clearly explained, lower rates of tax produce a higher yield and greater wealth in which all can share.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) illustrated how out of touch he, his party and the Social Democrats are with what has been happening all over the United Kingdom since the right to buy was given for the first time to those who previously had no choice. One million houses and flats, whose tenants were previously condemned to live in them for ever as local authority tenants, have now been sold. My right hon. Friend was right to mention that the acquisition of that wealth by over a million former tenants will bring some of them nearly up to the figure that appears in clause 147. From now on, £90,000 will be the limit below which no inheritance tax will be paid. It is not far-fetched to say that the value of some former council houses is now approaching that figure. I welcome the raising of the threshold from £71,000 to £90,000, and the fact that we are

able to obtain a higher yield from lower rates and higher thresholds for inheritance tax is proof positive of the economic justification for the Government's proposals.

My right hon. Friend told the Committee that many estates in the coming year would have been subject to inheritance tax but for the proposed changes in clause 147. That will mean a significant reduction in the burdens placed upon the Inland Revenue. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend will speak again in this debate, but it would be interesting to hear from him whether there will be any reduction in the staff of the capital taxes office as a result of the changes that he proposes in the Bill.

I hope that, should there be any more contributions from members of the Social Democratic party or the Liberal party during the Committee stage of the Bill, they will be better informed than the hon. Member for Gordon.

Dr. McDonald: First, let me point out that we entirely agree with the Chief Secretary about the confusion contained in the amendment, and in what was said by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). We do not intend to support what he said. The upshot of his amendment would be a decrease in the tax take from the present regime, but an increase in taxation on the proposals in the Bill.

I do not think that it is worth spending much more time on the points made by the alliance, as they were indeed confused. Perhaps by the time that the election comes, the alliance will have thought out its policy. But I feel that it is more important now for us to consider inheritance tax in the context of the general issue of taxation on individuals; and to bear in mind that, since 1979, the Government have reduced the annual yield of capital transfer tax — inheritance tax, as we now refer to it. Between 1979 and 1986, the reduction was about £488 million.

The Chief Secretary referred to some of the changes in capital transfer tax that the Government have made since 1979. However, he omitted to mention the costs as they were described in the Red Book. If I may take the most expensive example, the doubling of the threshold in 1980 cost £125 million. The full-year cost of clause 147 is estimated in this year's Red Book to be £170 million. That makes a total of £658 million by way of reduction in capital taxation.

The Chief Secretary made great play of reducing the rates and getting more tax. That does not fit very well with what the Minister of State, Treasury said in Standing Committee on last year's Finance Bill. He said:

"There is no disagreement between the hon. Lady"—

he was referring to me—

"and the Government that the yield from capital tax has fallen. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and I had a prolonged exchange on the Floor of the House on clause 80 . . . I gave him a global sum that acknowledged that the yield had been substantially reduced during the life of the present Government." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 10 June 1986; c. 387.]

At the immense full-year cost of £170 million, the Government have reduced the burden of capital taxation. That figure compares badly with the mere £10 million spent on special tax relief for the over-80s. The Government have shown plainly that they put their money in the pockets of their friends. They weep crocodile tears for the plight of the elderly, but spend a mere £10 million on them.

The Chief Secretary also made great play of the benefits that the proposal would bring to home owners. But what he forbore to mention was the extent of house price inflation, particularly in London and the south-east, where house prices are rising much faster than inflation. I see that the Chief Secretary is nodding away as though that just happens and as though it is no responsibility of the Government, but since 1979 the Government's record on both private and public sector house building has been dismal indeed. It is only recently that there has been an increase in private sector house building. Many Opposition Members are only too well aware of the fact that there has been no public sector house building whatsoever. It is not surprising, therefore, that house prices are inflated.

Many people have been able to buy their own homes, but those hon. Members with constituencies in London and in the south of England know that the price of a new house is well beyond the means of couples on average, or even above-average, incomes. Those who come to our advice surgeries are not worried about the amount of tax that they will have to pay on the house that they have inherited from their parents; they are worried about finding somewhere to live because they cannot afford to buy their own house or flat.

The price of a very tiny house in my constituency is about £50,000, which is well beyond the means of most people. They are therefore faced with a long wait for council accommodation. A young couple with a child may often be housed in the third bedroom of their parents' council house. Alternatively, they have nowhere to live at all. About 1 million people are far more worried about homelessness than they are about having to pay inheritance tax on their parents' home. The Chief Secretary pretends that the Government are concerned about such people but he has it all wrong and he is trying to give the wrong impression to the House. This clause is designed to deal not with the problems of home ownership but with the Government's determination to relieve the burden of taxation on the better off while increasing the burden on the worst off.

During Question Time today there was an exchange on the increase in the tax burden on those who are on half average earnings. A comparison of the 1978-79 tax system with the regime that applied up to the Budget—and in no way has it been altered by the Budget and the Finance Bill—shows that the top 1 per cent. of tax units on an income of £40,000 or more a year have had a reduction in the amount of tax for which they are liable of £7,700, while the bottom 50 per cent. of tax units have had a reduction of only £120. The Chief Secretary spoke at great length about helping people to own their own homes, but that is not the purpose of reducing the rates of inheritance tax. It is another part of the rigging of the tax machine to ensure that the better off pay far less tax while the poor pay tax to line the pockets of the rich.

We have seen at every turn during the last eight years that, sometimes blatantly and sometimes subtly, that is what has happened. The Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chief Secretary to the Treaury is looking somewhat sceptical. I only wish that he would read *Hansard* from time to time, especially the Financial Secretary's answers to written questions in which he is forced to tell the truth and puts his name to very detailed answers that make that perfectly clear to all concerned.

5.15 pm

It is also somewhat disingenuous of the Chief Secretary to take this clause in isolation. It has to be seen in the context of all the measures that deal with inheritance tax in the Finance Bill. In clause 148 and schedule 13 the Government have accepted the principle of the amendents that were moved by the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) during the proceedings in Standing Committee on last year's Finance Bill. It will be interesting to find out why that was done, and we shall pursue the point in Committee. The Minister of State says more in Standing Committee than the Chief Secretary would like him to do. He is an open and honest man, and it is most refreshing for Opposition Members to hear all that he has to say.

Referring to the amendment that had been moved by the hon. Member for Corby, the Minister of State said:

"The amendments deal with the effects of termination and creation of life interests . . . and are intended to probe the reason for those interests being treated in the same way as an absolute gift of free estate."

The Minister of State then made it clear that these interests were fully discussed when the matter was first introduced in 1982. He said:

"The trust regime was subject to consultation in 1982 and it has been widely accepted . . . The Government propose to leave the present trust regime in being, as a defence against the death charge, to prevent the death charge becoming voluntary." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 10 June 1986; c. 389-91.]

However, the thrust of the proposals of the hon. Member for Corby suddenly appear in other clauses of the Finance Bill that have been carefully left out of the proceedings in Committee of the whole House. The Minister will say that all will be made safe by the anti-avoidance provisions of schedule 13, but that schedule will be subjected to the strictest parliamentary scrutiny. It is not possible to rush through that schedule before the election.

Once again we are deeply suspicious of the reduced rates of inheritance tax. The Chief Secretary put the best gloss on it that he possibly could from his point of view, but it has little to do with protecting the interests of the so-called modest home owner. It has much more to do with the Government's usual trick of lining the pockets of the rich. We reject the way in which the Government continue to rig the tax regime in their favour.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I want to raise an issue on this amendment that was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). It relates to my theory about the effect of capital gains tax and capital transfer tax in the south of England on property prices. During the last seven years one of the greatest movements in property prices nationally has taken place in the home counties and also in many other areas where there are no Labour Members of Parliament. It is about time that the people in those areas, who in the last seven years have increasingly been willing to move towards Conservatism, stopped to consider what is happening, why they are paying higher and higher prices and why hundreds of thousands of young people in the southern counties cannot afford to buy a home. I can give them the answer tonight.

Large numbers of people in the south, when they buy a property, acquire substantial tranches of wealth, that arise directly out of the reductions in capital transfer tax that have taken place during the last seven years. The reductions that have taken place in capital gains tax as well, certainly as they affect some people, have also liberated funds there for use in the purchase of property. It is those two things separately, and in their interaction, as they are used in the process of acquiring property, that force up property values in the south.

Perhaps I can give some examples. Let us take a Georgian house in my constituency. For what might be regarded as a typical London Georgian house, one would probably pay probably £20,000 to £25,000. In London the price might be £400,000. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock it might be £70,000 or £80,000. Although that is only one fifth of the price of a similar property in central London, it is still three times higher than the price of a similar property in the north of England. The reason is very simple. The money does not circulate in those communities in the north, in the midlands, or in Scotland in sufficient volume to influence the property market by being available for the purchase of property.

One of the most efficient ways of bringing some sanity back into property prices in the London area and the south of England and giving people the opportunity to buy their own homes — which, the Government tell us, is their policy — would be substantially to increase taxes in this area and take out of the economy this money, which is being used for industrial investment, and so on, overseas, and also for inflating the property boom in the south of England.

I tell people outside the House that they would do well not to sit and gloat over the substantial increases in their assets in London and other parts of the south. They ought, rather, to consider the hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of people in the south of England who will never own a home if we allow the current tax regime to go on well into the future. We are not talking only about Labour voters. We are talking also about many Conservatives who also want to own their own homes but who will never have the opportunity to do so because of the fund of money that is being made available to prop up prices in the south.

One of the facets of the "two nation" argument that has developed over the past few years is this difference that exists in property prices between the south and the rest of the country. It is accentuated by the concentration of wealth here. If we were to look at the figures — this reduced tax base, but greater revenue, which the Minister tells us he is getting from these taxes — they would show that there is a heavy concentration of wealth in the south. It is all splashing about in what is geographically a very small area and it is inflating house prices in a way that is against the public interest. I think that the Government should act accordingly.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): A recent survey in Stafford indicated the required income for a person who lived at the upper end of the income scale so that he could have a five-bedroomed house, a fairly substantial car and a child away at school, and also at the lower end of the scale, which is where the houses are somewhat cheaper. I have just bought a house in Stafford for £8,000, which was extremely interesting to me, and it leads me to the point that there are significant reasons — this is the other side of the argument of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) — why people should move to the midlands or the north, because they get significantly better value for money as regards the cost of living and the value of property in what is quite often a prosperous town.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way to me when I have just made a contribution.

Will he accept that the fact that people move north should be weighed against the fact that many do not move north because they are scared to jump off the escalator of property prices in the south? They are concerned that if they move from the south to the north they will never be able to move back to the south because they will not be able to afford to do so. That is part of the north-south divide.

Mr. Cash: That is an interesting point, to which I have an immediate answer. GEC recently moved its transformer division to Stafford. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, because a substantial proportion of the people who lived in Broadstairs, when they saw what was on offer and what value they could get by moving to Stafford, did so with alacrity. I hope that I have dealt with the point that the hon. Gentleman made. There is a considerable incentive for people to move, because it is to their advantage.

We are here, however, dealing with inheritance tax. The hon. Member for Workington raised the question whether it was unfair that people on lower incomes were unable to acquire property and hold it in trust for, or for the benefit of, their children. It is the Labour party's policy of denying, or at any rate inhibiting, the right of people to buy council houses that is causing serious difficulties for those who would like to be members of the property-owning democracy.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is not part of Labour's policy.

Mr. Cash: That may be so, but there has always been this inhibition. It may be that this is a reaction to prospects of electoral success and the party is trimming its policies.

Dr. McDonald: I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware that not only would we insist on people having the right to buy council houses, but that we would ask the hon. Member to accept the extension of the right to buy privately rented property. Is he prepared to go the whole hog on the question of private home ownership?

Mr. Cash: I am impressed by the hon. Lady's conversion. If she and her colleagues have now seen the light on this policy, which is fundamental to the Conservative philosophy, all I can say is that they really have got the skids under them and that their conversion to this policy, in electoral terms, is to be encouraged. If the goings-on in the far north, or rather, if I may say so, in the pockets of Militant Tendency and Left-wing politics in London and elsewhere, are shared by the Front Bench of the Labour party, we really will be travelling. But the reality is that the Left wing of the Labour party does not believe in the policies put forward, purely for electoral reasons, by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

I shall deal briefly with the alliance, because this is its amendment. Do the proposers of the amendment believe that it is a good idea to have a 100 per cent. inheritance tax? I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) will give me quick, straight answers. Particularly with regard to agricultural land, should there be a complete prohibition of the opportunity for farmers to pass on their land to their children? Does the alliance believe that it is essential that farming land should be nationalised? In the agricultural context, I believe it to be essential that farmers and those who own the sort of property that I have mentioned should have the opportunity to pass it on to succeeding generations. The hon. Member has indicated not, but I should like to hear it from his lips.

5.30 pm

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) asked three questions. The answers are no, no and no.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Does the hon. Gentleman wish to reply to the debate?

Mr. Bruce: I will reply briefly to the debate. As the Committee has indicated a wish to be tidy I will make a couple of other points so as to avoid having to speak again.

The exchanges at the beginning of the debate reminded me that in Scotland we are used to referring to the auld alliance. Speeches from the Tory and Labour Benches against me showed alliance at work and perhaps the reactions were predictable. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) must be under pressure from the alliance in his constituency, judging by the speeches which he constantly makes. He chose to launch a strenuous attack on an amendment which concedes the need to raise the threshold but is not as enthusiastic about it as the Government. I feel that he protested a little too much to be convincing.

On house prices, which I shall not deal with other than as they relate to the amendment, when the Government are raising thresholds, which we think is legitimate up to a point, it is reasonable to take account of house price increases, given that the home is the main capital asset of most families. The Government have to be careful that they do not get ahead of the field to the point where their tax changes actually fuel increases in house prices rather than reflect them.

We believe that the increases the Government have gone for are more likely to fuel than to reflect increases in house prices, especially when coupled with tax relief above the standard rate of income tax for the purchase of houses. That is why we have argued that mortgage tax relief, which should continue, should be restricted to the standard rate of tax and that the increase in inheritance tax should reflect rather than add to the increase in house prices. In our amendment we have sought to get the balance right. Certainly we feel that we are closer to the correct balance than is the Government's proposal.

The Chief Secretary made the slightly spurious and perhaps unprovable contention, which was echoed by some of his colleagues, that by cutting the incidence of tax the Government have boosted revenue. If they had not cut the burden of tax, would not the buoyancy of the revenue have been further enhanced? The reliefs that the Government have allowed over the years on capital taxes have accumulated to about £800 million. I think that we are entitled to assume that that should be available for spending on services which should have higher priority than increasing relief to the better-off members of the community, who have done exceptionally well out of the Government.

If more relief is given to the richer members of the community, the Government are less able to attack the

[Mr. Bruce]

problems facing the people at the bottom. There is any amount of evidence to show that as a direct result of Government policy over the last eight years the rich have got richer and the poor have got poorer. The provisions of the clause will increase rather than reduce the gap. That is why we have drawn attention to it and have sought to modify the increase.

One argument that the Government use against both major Opposition groupings is that when we put forward plans for increasing investment in the Health Service, in education or in housing it is not possible to achieve that without paying for it. We acknowledge that. On the alliance Benches we have assiduously costed our plans and we will put detailed information to the electorate when the time comes.

The converse is that, if the Government go on giving away in extra relief substantial sums of money, their ability to fulfil their pledge to maintain standards in the Health Service and in education is shown to be a sham. The people know that these services have not been safe in the Government's hands because they have been keener on giving money back over-generously to the better-off and have therefore reduced their ability to provide funds for services needed by the whole population and for dealing with the problems of poverty.

The alliance believes that there should be taxes on capital and that there should be fair and effective methods of redistributing wealth. The Conservative Government have said nothing about the distribution of wealth; they talk only about its accumulation. As I have said, the distribution is getting more rather than less unequal.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman has said that we are not interested in the distribution of wealth. Nothing could be further from the truth. By making the most of resources and by developing wealth from the basis of a profitable property-owning democracy, including the principle of inheritance, one is able to accumulate wealth and as a result to distribute it. The hon. Gentleman has demonstrated that he does not have the faintest idea about economics. I am surprised that he holds his present position in the alliance.

Mr. Bruce: These interventions come from quarters of which we know the composition of the electorate the last time it was tested. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman asserts, I repeat that the concentration of wealth has become more unequal during the eight years of the Government's tenure of office. That is a fact for which there is ample evidence and support.

In tabling the amendment we have recognised the changes that have taken place. I have already said that we think it proper to reflect changes in average house prices but that we do not think it right for the Government to go too far down the road so that they no longer have the ability to achieve balance and justice.

The Government should promote taxes on capital which are effective at redistributing wealth and which are seen to be fair. That is why we have argued the case for tighter taxation of lifetime gifts and have recommended consideration of an accession tax. That is a simple tax on the recipients rather than on the holders of wealth. The tax efficiency point is that, if a wealthy person chooses to distribute his or her wealth by dividing it among a large number of recipients, the total tax burden accruing to that wealth is reduced. For example, if £1 million is given to one person, that person will inevitably pay a substantial amount of tax on accession of that wealth. If the money is given to 100 people, the total tax take to the Treasury will be reduced because the people receiving the gift will not reach the higher threshold. It is a simple tax-efficient system which would encourage wealthy people to distribute their wealth widely in a way that has not happened recently. As I have said, the reverse has been the case.

The debate has been worth while. It has opened up some interesting avenues. I acknowledge that the difference between our amendment and what the Government propose is not substantial but in our view it would be a more balanced approach to the problem. The purpose of the amendment was to secure the debate which we have had. We wanted to argue the case that the Government are going too far. I make no apology for repeating that, as the house price argument has been a major factor in justifying the Government's action, I believe that the Government have gone too far down the road and may be responsible for increasing house prices, particularly in the areas where prices are highest. In those circumstances, I believe that our amendment has considerable merit.

Given the thinness of our numbers, for reasons which puzzle many of us and about which people outside speculate, I do not wish to press the amendment, but I thank the Committee for the debate.

The First Deputy Chairman: Is it the will of the Committee that the amendment be withdrawn?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Committee divided: Ayes 186, Noes 69.

Division No. 188] [5.40 pm

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Fox, Sir Marcus
Ashby, David	Franks, Cecil
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Freeman, Roger
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Galley, Roy
Baldry, Tony	Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Bigge-Davison, Sir John	Gorst, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Gow, Ian
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Grant, Sir Anthony
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Greenway, Harry
Brinton, Tim	Gregory, Conal
Brooke, Hon Peter	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Browne, John	Grylls, Michael
Bruinvels, Peter	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Buck, Sir Antony	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Hampson, Dr Keith
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Hannam, John
Cash, William	Harris, David
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	Harvey, Robert
Chapman, Sydney	Hawkesley, Warren
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Hayes, J.
Coombs, Simon	Hayward, Robert
Cope, John	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Cormack, Patrick	Heddle, John
Corrie, John	Henderson, Barry
Couchman, James	Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Dorrell, Stephen	Hind, Kenneth
Egger, Tim	Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Farr, Sir John	Holt, Richard
Fenner, Dame Peggy	Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Forman, Nigel	Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Forth, Eric	Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*

Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hert'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Portillo and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cleryd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge Hl)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Leighton, Ronald
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Rose, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Torney, Tom
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Tony Lloyd.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 147 ordered to stand part of the Bill.
Clause 160 ordered to stand part of the Bill.
Clause 18 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 33

EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES, ETC.

Mr. MacGregor: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 23, line 7, after 'Schedule', insert
'and the consequential provisions relating to capital gains tax in Part IIA thereof'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 8.

Mr. MacGregor: It might be helpful if I discuss clause 33 and schedule 4, which have two main purposes. They introduce an improvement to the 1980 and 1984 Finance Acts and share option schemes—*[Interruption.]* I can understand the puzzlement of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I was rather surprised to find myself speaking on this amendment so soon.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Perhaps we could jointly clear up this slight confusion. I had assumed, Mr. Armstrong, that, in accordance with the business motion which the Committee passed yesterday, we were proceeding to deal with clause 160.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is true. I put the Question, That clause 160 stand part of the Bill, and it was carried. I also put the question on clause 18.

Mr. MacGregor: There were no speakers on clause 160. Apparently, no hon. Member wanted to speak to it.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I came with the intention of speaking on clause 160. I think that we were expecting a speech from my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary. I did not think that it was my place to rise before my hon. Friend had done so. In fact, I had a personal assurance from him that he was about to speak on that subject. I am surprised that the Committee will not be able to debate this important matter.

The First Deputy Chairman: I understand the hon. Member's disappointment but, when I put the Question that the clause stand part of the Bill, no hon. Member rose. I cannot call hon. Members who do not rise in their place.

Mr. MacGregor: Clause 33 and schedule 4 have two main purposes. They introduce an improvement to the 1980 and 1984 Finance Acts and share option schemes. This is a new facility to enable employees whose company is taken over to exchange their existing share options under an approved scheme for options over shares in the acquiring company. This meets representations on the point, and I am sure that it will be welcomed. Until now, an employee in this situation has been forced either to realise his existing option with the risk that, if three years have not elapsed, the gain will be liable to income tax, or to maintain the option in a company in which the shares will be mostly held by the new parent. There is to be no statutory obligation on the acquiring company to extend this opportunity to the employees of the target company. However, this factor will certainly become one of many discussed between all the parties concerned at the time of the merger or acquisition.

The intention is that the employees concerned should be no worse off and no better off, technically, than if the takeover had not occurred, and they had simply held on to their original options. To qualify, therefore, the new options must, first, continue to be governed by the rules of the target company's existing schemes — this will ensure, for example, that the employees do not lose any rights attaching to the options which they had hitherto enjoyed or, for that matter, gain any rights that they did not previously have—and, secondly, be equal in value to the old options at the time of the exchange. This is very much a technical matter. This condition will be satisfied where the total market value of the shares under the old and new options at the time of the exchange is the same and the total price payable on exercise of the new option is also the same as the total exercise price under the old option.

The two Government amendments ensure that employees are not faced with an unintended capital gains tax charge as a result of such an exchange. Under an amendment which has not been called, although its purport may be discussed in the debate, there is a suggestion to make the approval of a company's Finance Act 1984 share option scheme conditional upon it also introducing an all-employee 1978 or 1980 Finance Act scheme. We want to encourage the take-up of all three kinds of approved scheme. A restriction of that sort would not help that objective. For many companies, an all-employee scheme may initially be inappropriate—that is why I would not wish to make a restriction.

We would want this change to be available to both 1980 and 1984 schemes at once. For many companies, an all-employee scheme may initially be inappropriate or seem to burden them. There is a danger that a condition of this kind would discourage such companies from introducing any scheme at all—discretionary or all-employee. There is no evidence to suggest that the introduction of the 1984 scheme has had an adverse impact on the other schemes. On the contrary, all three schemes are popular and successful in their own right. For example, in the year to March 1987 a record total of over 200 new all-employee schemes were approved by the Inland Revenue, bringing the total to over 1,250 such schemes, and there are now more than 2,000 approved 1984 schemes.

Clause 33 and schedule 4 also introduce certain technical changes to the close company material interest provisions as applied when determining whether employees may participate in their company's approved share or share option schemes. Some of these changes were announced by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on 13 November last year. All of them — clause 39 deals with a related matter—are designed to help to ensure the smooth running of all three kinds of approved employee share schemes, but there are also some consequential changes in the way in which these provisions apply for close company interest relief purposes.

The main effect of the present provisions will be to ease the position so that trust-held shares may be disregarded in calculating the material interest disqualification where the individual irrevocably disclaims or otherwise surrenders his interest in the trust and he has received no benefit from it. This will help those individuals who might otherwise have been unable to participate in an approved scheme. There are also certain other more technical changes mainly designed to clarify and ensure the smooth running of the existing rules.

6 pm

The spread of share ownership to all levels of a company is, and has been throughout, a major objective of the Government. These modest changes will enhance the employee share ownership movement still further.

We seem to be making very good progress today, Mr. Armstrong, and I thought that in order to facilitate the progress it would be better to talk about clause 33 and schedule 4 in general, but in particular I have referred to the purposes of amendments 4 and 8 and I commend them to the Committee.

Mr. Gould: In accordance with the lead provided by the Chief Secretary, I propose to speak briefly in a debate which I assume will cover the clause itself and the amendments.

My hon. Friends and I generally support employee share option schemes and welcome the measures in the clause and in the schedule, and indeed in the amendments. It is clearly right to take account of the immense impact that takeovers have had over the last year or two years, and there seems no reason to believe that that impact will be very much reduced in the immediate future. Huge sums have been involved. I will not weary the Committee with a recital of the billions of pounds' worth of assets involved in bids over recent years. We have the prospect of that continuing, although I suppose it is fair to say, judging simply by a reading of newspaper headlines, that there has perhaps been a temporary lull over the last month or two.

But the conditions that prompted the takeover fever and the merger mania still prevail. The deregulation of the City and the cash-rich companies which now, both as victims and as predators, feature in these takeover bids are still there. Those who are victims still continue to offer very attractive targets and those who are predators clearly have the cash and the resources with which to make their predatory raids. They do so and they are likely to continue to do so, largely because the conditions in which investment in new capacity might be attractive are absent.

For those reasons it seems to me that the spate of takeover bids is likely to continue and it is therefore absolutely right, and indeed commendable, that the Government should be legislating to take account of the likelihood that more and more employees will be affected by takeover bids in the future. Indeed, in January 1986 the Transport and General Workers Union estimated that no fewer than half a million people worked for firms which

were the subject of or were involved in takeover bids. Therefore, it is, potentially at any rate, a very substantial problem.

In those circumstances, I think it is right that those who are members of employee share option schemes should have the sort of protection that is provided in these new provisions. Nevertheless, the provisions leave open a number of questions, and certainly leave a couple of questions hanging in the air. It is to those questions that I should like to draw the Chief Secretary's attention.

If employees who participate in share option schemes are to be given this protection in the case of a successful takeover bid, why is similar protection not being given to the beneficiaries of pension funds? Why is similar provision not being made for employees in general, simply by virtue of their position as employees? After all, far and away the most important piece of property which is at risk as a consequence of a takeover bid is not a small holding in a share option scheme but the job of a worker, not to mention his or her rights as a beneficiary under a pension fund. Therefore, we are bound to ask what is so special about rights conferred by share ownership. Why should the protection of this provision be made available to those who own bits of paper in respect of their shareholdings but not to employees as workers—in other words, not in relation to their jobs?

The Chief Secretary must surely be aware of the problems. He must know that on almost every occasion on which a takeover bid is mounted the workers, usually the employees of the victim company, are extremely nervous, and often with very good reason, about whether their jobs are going to be placed at risk. It is remarkable that in these circumstances it is the employees whose jobs are most on the line who are often kept most in the dark. It is they who have the fewest rights to information and who, generally speaking, are not consulted about what is going on. They know that rationalisation—which is the term usually applied to the objective of takeovers—is almost always a euphemism for laying people off. Therefore, why is no protection being provided to workers qua employees, quite apart from the question whether they own shares?

More particularly, what about the rights of pension fund beneficiaries? Again, the Chief Secretary must be aware—I know that his Department is, because it has taken some small action already—of the abuses and scandals which have disfigured so many takeover bids with respect to the rights of beneficiaries and the treatment of pension funds. All too often we have seen instances in which pension fund surpluses, which are truly the property of the beneficiaries, have been traded away as part of the assets of the target company or in other circumstances have been the target of the predator company, which has got its hands on those surpluses and in some cases actually used them to pay off part of the purchase price of the company which it has acquired, or even to make redundancy payments to the workers whom it then proceeds to lay off.

For all those reasons, it seems remarkable to me, and remiss of the Government, that they should have rushed to legislate—quite rightly and commendably, as I have said—in this area, but not in respect of those many thousands, indeed millions, of workers who have rights under occupational pension schemes.

The Chief Secretary may perhaps remark that these matters do not arise directly under the clause, but I think he will accept that they are legitimate questions in this context. We make the point very strongly that if we are to legislate to take account of the impact on employees of the current and projected spate of takeover bids, we must pay attention to the matters that I have sought to raise.

The next Labour Government will certainly take steps to provide new rights of consultation and information for employees. We will also provide appropriate new rights for the beneficiaries of pension funds so that they too can be protected when their interests are affected by takeover bids.

Mr. MacGregor: I think it would be right for me to reply briefly to the point made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). One answer, as I think he recognises, is that clause 33 is entirely about employee share schemes and not about anything else. Secondly, it is designed simply to remove a technical tax difficulty that had arisen.

On the third point, I think that the most important answer to his question is that what is being proposed under clause 33 is not to make it obligatory for the acquiring company to extend the opportunity of having a share option to those in the target company who already have share options. There is no new statutory obligation being imposed as a result of this clause. It is up to the acquiring company to decide whether it wants to extend to those employees with share options in the target company the possibility of having share options in the new company. What the clause does is to remove a technical tax obstacle to that. In that sense there is a difference between this and the extension of statutory obligations, in the case of a merger on the acquiring company.

In the case of the jobs of the employees, which was one of the examples that the hon. Gentleman gave, where employees become employees of the acquiring company because it wishes them to remain in their jobs, their tax position is not adversely affected. But if we had not made this change it is possible that those who had share options and were given the opportunity of new share options would have found that their position had been adversely affected, because if, for example, three years had not elapsed since they acquired the option the gain would have been liable to income tax. All we are doing is removing an obstacle, to enable the acquiring company to make that offer. That is probably the crucial difference. That is why I put such stress on the fact that employees should be technically no worse off as far as their share options are concerned and no better off had the takeover not occurred, but it is still available to them not to have the share option at all.

Mr. Gould: I am not seeking to argue that the points I made are on all fours with the precise problem addressed by this clause. I take the point entirely that it follows, therefore, that the mechanism for removing an obstacle in this case may not be appropriate in the cases that I have sought to raise. I am asking the Chief Secretary to address the principle that lies behind this provision—a principle that we endorse and welcome—and the absence of any consideration, so it seems, in the Government's mind of the rights of employees in a more general sense on the occasion of a takeover and, in particular, of the precise rights of beneficiaries under pension funds. At present, as he knows, beneficiaries often have to rely on perhaps badly drawn-up trust instruments of some sort that have very little protection from statutory law.

Mr. MacGregor: We are at one on this clause. The hon. Gentleman is raising much wider issues. Off the top of my head I do not see that there are any obstacles that we are removing here in relation to the straightforward job position of an employee being taken over, because the similar tax obstacles are not there. The question of information goes rather wider than we might be able to discuss on the Finance Bill.

On the pensions issue, again the hon. Gentleman raised much wider issues that should be debated on other occasions. The clause and amendments are fairly narrow but I believe beneficial, and I hope that I have answered the points that the hon. Gentleman raised.

Amendment agreed to.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 23, line 7, at end insert—

'(1A) In paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 10 to the Finance Act 1984 for the definition of "qualifying employee" there shall be substituted the following words "qualifying employee" in relation to a company, means an employee of the company (other than one who is a director of the company or, in the case of a group scheme, of a participating company) who is required, under the terms of his employment, to work for the company for—

(a) at least twenty hours a week where the employee has been employed continuously by the company for not more than one year, or

(b) at least sixteen hours a week where the employee has been employed continuously by the company for more than one year but not more than three years, or

(c) at least twelve hours a week where the employee has been employed continuously by the company for more than three years but not more than five years, or

(d) at least eight hours a week where the employee has been employed continuously by the company for more than five years.'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it may be convenient to take amendment No. 6, in page 23, line 7, at end insert—

'(1A) in paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 10 to the Finance Act 1984 for the definition of "qualifying employee" there shall be substituted the following words—"qualifying employee" in relation to a company, means—an employee of the company (other than one who is a director of the company or, in the case of a group scheme, of a participating company) who is required, under the terms of his employment, to work for the company for at least twenty hours a week; and any other employee provided that in such a case the number of shares which he is granted the right to acquire bears the same proportion to the number of shares which he would have been granted the right to acquire had he worked for twenty hours per week as the number of hours he is required to work bears to twenty.'.

Sir William Clark: I do not think that I need detain the Committee for long. The share option scheme has been a great success. All parties have welcomed it because the practicality of it and the benefits it gives employees are beyond doubt. It is a great asset and is of great benefit to employees. In the legislation, only employees who work at least 20 hours per week for a company are entitled to participate in share option schemes. Most economic pundits would agree with me that the number of part-time workers will increase in the future. Accordingly, I wonder whether 20 hours per week is the right figure or whether we should reduce it.

Amendment No. 5 proposes that, where an employee does not work at least 20 hours a week but only works 10 hours, 16 hours or whatever, the number of hours worked plus the length of service should entitle an employee to participate in a share options scheme. If the Government do not like that proposition, amendment No. 6 proposes an equation based on the figure of 20 hours a week. If an employee who worked 20 hours a week under a share option scheme was entitled to 100 shares, an employee who worked only 10 hours a week should be entitled to 50 shares. That is the idea behind amendment No. 6.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will not dismiss this out of hand. It is absolutely essential that we give the benefit of share option schemes to regular employees who work, albeit part-time. In the retail trade, in which I have no vested interest, part-time employees who work on a Friday or a Saturday quite obviously do not work 20 hours a week, but they are still regular employees. They may work only 14 hours or 16 hours a week, but the Government should give some thought to including in this legislation those sorts of employees.

The purpose behind my amendment, with which I am sure my right hon. Friend will agree, is that I do not want any loopholes on the matter of share option schemes. Many of these part-time workers, particularly married women, have worked for up to 20 years for a particular employer. Consequently, they should have similar benefits to their colleagues who work 20 hours a week or more. They should not get the same benefits as employees who work 20 hours a week, but, depending on the number of hours they work per week, and upon their length of service with the particular employer, they should receive some benefit. I hope that my right hon. Friend will give sympathetic consideration to both those amendments and I ask the Committee to accept them.

6.15 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir William Clark) has said. My name is attached to amendments Nos. 5 and 6. I think all hon. Members agree that the employee share scheme legislation first introduced in the Finance Act 1978, which has been improved in two succeeding Finance Acts, has been an enormous success. I do not know what the numbers are today of employees who participate in Finance Act 1978 schemes, but I believe that not only do a very large number of schemes now qualify but that there are a large number of employees who now hold shares in the companies which employ them as a direct result of this legislation. That is welcome.

It has been possible for any company with a stock exchange listing to set up a scheme of this kind to enable most, but not all, employees to participate. The concern that my hon. Friend and I have is that this should be widened a little. There is no doubt that part-time employment is growing all the time. That is to be welcomed. The object of the two amendments is to achieve some sensible and equitable way of ensuring that part-time employees can participate in these schemes.

My hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but amendments Nos. 5 and 6 suggest alternative schemes to enable part-time employees to participate. Clause 5 proposes reducing the qualifying number of hours in accordance with the number of years that a part-time employee has worked for his company and clause 6 tackles the problem in another way by reducing the number of shares that a part-time employee is able to take in any one

year. When my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary replies, I hope that he will look at the principle underlying the amendments sympathetically.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir William Clark) and my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) for raising these amendments. I certainly agree with both of them about the great importance of employee share schemes and I share with them the delight about the way in which they have grown and the way in which benefits have been extended to so many more employees over recent years. I also agree with both of them about the importance of part-time employment. In no sense in what I am about to say are any of my remarks directed against that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South made clear, the purpose of the amendments is to admit part-time employees to Finance Act 1984 approved employee option schemes. His amendments give us a choice. We considered this carefully when the 1984 scheme was first introduced. Indeed, we modified our original proposals to reduce the qualifying limit for employees who are not directors from 25 hours to 20 hours a week. However, we felt then, and we continue to feel, that it would not be right to go any further, certainly at this stage, and perhaps I can explain why.

My hon. Friend referred to part-timers in a retail shop. Of course, those part-timers can benefit under the schemes in the Finance Act 1978 and the Finance Act 1980. Both those schemes must be available to all the company's employees on similar terms and there are relatively low limits on the level of benefits. Therefore, they are available to part-timers but the scope for abuse in respect of part-timers is limited.

By contrast, the benefits under the Finance Act 1984 schemes can be much greater. Those schemes are discretionary. They do not have to be available to all employees. The point on which one has to reflect is that the scheme in the Finance Act 1984 offers generous tax reliefs and it is aimed particularly at improving the motivation of key employees who can contribute substantially to their company's success. Part-time employees, such as those in a retail shop to whom my hon. Friend referred, may, of course, have an important contribution to make — indeed they do — but by definition it is unlikely to be as substantial or capable of enhancement by improved incentives as in the case of full-time workers. Of course, as with any such limits, some individuals will always find themselves on the wrong side, wherever a dividing line may be drawn. As a matter of judgment we believe that the present rules strike a reasonable balance of 20 hours a week.

It is possible for companies to grant share options to their part-time employees in other ways. For example—I do not float this as particularly likely—they could do so under an unapproved scheme. That would mean there would not be any special tax relief for the employee's gain on exercising the option. More importantly, they could set up a Finance Act 1980 approved savings-related share option scheme. As I said, that would allow part-time employees and directors to take part.

My hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, South and Beaconsfield have made their point succinctly. I agree with both of them on the objective of achieving as wide a spread of share ownership as possible. I have no doubt that my hon. Friends will continue to watch the progress of the 1984 schemes and may return to the matter in future debates. We can consider it again then. For the reasons I have given, I cannot recommend the Committee to accept the amendments.

Mr. Tim Smith: Under the Finance Act 1978 scheme, what is the qualifying period for participation? I am not clear whether any employee can participate, regardless of the number of hours per week they work or whether there is a minimum number of hours per week that one has to work before participating in a 1978 scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: My recollection—if I am wrong I shall write to my hon. Friend—is that, since the scheme has to be available to all employees, it covers part-time employees of any sort.

Sir William Clark: I understand from the response of my right hon. Friend that he will keep the matter under review and that we can come back to it at some time in the future. I am convinced, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and I am sure other right hon. and hon. Members, that wider share ownership should be extended. In view of the fact that my right hon. Friend has promised to keep it under review and that we can come back to it in the future, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 33, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 4

EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES, ETC.

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 122, line 38, at end insert—

'PART IIA

CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO CAPITAL GAINS TAX

3A. In section 47 of the Finance Act 1980 (savings-related share option schemes) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) Where a right to acquire shares in a body corporate which was obtained as mentioned in subsection (1) above is exchanged for a right to acquire shares in another body corporate in accordance with a provision included in a scheme pursuant to paragraph 10A of Schedule 10 to this Act, the exchange shall not be treated for the purposes of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 as involving any disposal of the first-mentioned right or any acquisition of the other right, but for those purposes the other right shall be treated as the same asset acquired as the first-mentioned right was acquired."

3B. In section 38 of the Finance Act 1984 (approved share option schemes) after subsection (6) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(6A) Where a right to acquire shares in a body corporate is exchanged for a right to acquire shares in another body corporate in accordance with a provision included in a scheme pursuant to paragraph 4A of Schedule 10 to this Act, the exchange shall not be treated for the purposes of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 as involving any disposal of the first-mentioned right or any acquisition of the other right, but for those purposes the other right shall be treated as the same asset acquired as the first-mentioned right was acquired.".'.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

Schedule 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 45

CARRY-BACK OF RELIEF

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): Last year we extended the life of the business expansion scheme indefinitely and, in putting it on a long-term footing, we made a number of changes to focus the impact of the scheme more closely on its original objectives and to improve its operation. After such major changes we think that there is a good case this year for keeping further revisions to a minimum. I am glad that the changes we have proposed were welcomed by the Leader of the Opposition on Budget day.

Clause 45 is intended to reduce bunching of investment towards the last quarter of the tax year. As hon. Members will know, under the scheme relief is given for the tax year in which shares in a qualifying company are issued to an investor following subscription. Therefore, in order to obtain relief in any particular year, there is a deadline for investment of 5 April. Naturally, many people delay making their investment until near that deadline so that they have an idea of what their personal financial affairs are like towards the end of the financial year. For some it may be because they wish to minimise the length of time between paying for the shares and recovering the tax relief. Others may not have a clear idea until a late stage as to what their financial position for that tax year will be, so they have no idea how much money may be available or what tax relief they would get.

As experience of the scheme on the part of investors and promoters has grown, there has been an increase in the amount of investment earlier in the tax year, particularly in the third quarter. However, there is no doubt that it remains more difficult for companies to raise equity under the scheme in the first half of the tax year.

There is no simple solution to the problem. Whatever deadline is set for the making of investments under the scheme, it is likely that there will be a concentration of investments shortly before it. Therefore, simply putting back the deadline would hardly help the companies concerned. However, we believe that the proposal now before the Committee will provide an incentive for more investment to be made under the scheme in the first half of the tax year.

We propose that an investor should be allowed to claim relief in the preceding tax year on up to half of any investments made under the scheme in that period, subject to a limit of £5,000 on the total amount of relief for all investments that can be carried back from any tax year to the previous one. To take advantage of that option, the investment would have to be made during the first half of the new tax year—between 6 April and 5 October. The normal limit of £40,000 on the amount of investment on which relief might be claimed for any one year would continue to apply. I do not suggest to the Committee that that change will eliminate completely the phenomenon of bunching. However, I believe that it will have a valuable impact and will make it easier for companies to raise business expansion scheme finance in the first half of the tax year.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I want to say a few words about the clause, but before I do I should declare an interest. I do some work for a company that manages a business expansion scheme fund. I hope that what I lack in objectivity will be made up for by a little personal experience.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary described the problem fairly accurately but, in fact, there are two problems. One is in connection with BES funds and the other is in connection with individuals. The amendment to the law that he has proposed will go a long way towards solving the problem for individuals. There will be BES issues aimed at them in the first part of the tax year which will give them some relief in the previous part of the tax year, enable the sort of carry-over to which he referred and remove bunching. However, it does not solve the problem of BES funds.

I think that BES fund managers find that they cannot raise money for a BES fund until towards the end of a calendar year because people have no idea what their tax position will be and they want to leave it late. At the same time, the BES fund manager has to give himself room to invest the money. Most of us find that we cannot raise the money until about October in a calendar year and that effectively means that we reach Christmas by the time we have the money. Therefore, we have effectively three months to invest it. My practical experience of the company for which I do some work is that fund managers are running around looking for things in which to invest in March. That is a bad thing. It often means that money is thrown at deals that the scheme was not intended to help promote. The clause will not solve that problem. I shall explain why and ask my hon. Friend whether he will deal with it, if not on this occasion, at a later date.

6.30 pm

The first problem is that if a fund is not fully invested by 5 April, the carry-over relief is of no use, first, because it applies only to half the uninvested amount and, secondly, because the maximum is £5,000. If an individual had put £40,000 into a fund and that fund was 75 per cent. invested by the end of the tax year, the carry-over relief would entitle him to a reduction of only £5,000, not the £10,000 remaining uninvested in the fund. The second problem is that, regardless of how much money one puts into the fund—even if one puts in only £10,000—one is still entitled to a reduction of only half the amount that is uninvested at the end of the year.

The clause represents an attempt to come to grips with a real problem, but it does not do so in respect of BES funds. Although most of the money that has been raised for BES issues in the past couple of years has been in one-off public prospectus issues, my hon. Friend would do well to consider trying to encourage people to make such investments through funds. There is a considerable amount of evidence that many public prospectus issues are put together specifically for the purpose of raising money under the business expansion scheme. They are not pre-existing companies that are looking for development capital. Business expansion scheme funds are in a position to find the sort of investments that my hon. Friend wants to see made under the scheme. BES funds are in a position to seek out relatively small companies that are looking for £100,000 to £200,000. However, if a City institution is to promote a BES issue, it has to consider raising £2 million to make it worth the effort.

Not enough of the companies that one wants to help with BES are trying to raise that amount of money.

Therefore, the sorts of issues that are put together in public prospectuses to raise money under the business expansion scheme are — not always, but often — artificially put together solely to take advantage of the BES. One can however, say with a good deal of honesty that money that is raised by BES is often development capital that is genuinely needed in an existing small business.

Although the clause will help to solve the bunching problem for an individual and allow him to wait until the end of the tax year to see how much money he will have to pay on and therefore how much he should invest in the BES because of the relief that he needs, something slightly different is needed for BES funds. I ask my hon. Friend to consider proposing that, as long as the money is invested in a BES fund, perhaps not even by 31 March, but some earlier date such as 31 January in a tax year, the fund managers should have an additional four, five or six months after the end of the tax year to invest the money. In that way, one will encourage people to invest in BES funds and give BES funds a little more time to look for the sort of businesses in which they should invest and not find themselves in the last couple of weeks of March, scrambling around for deals to throw money into. If 5 April arrives and they have not done so, all the tax relief is lost and everybody—the managers and investors—will be in an extremely difficult position. I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend will consider introducing an amendment to that effect at some stage during the passage of the Bill or, if the Bill is lost, in the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. Tim Smith: There is always a slight danger, on occasions such as this when the Government introduce an extension to an existing tax relief, to say that it is all very well as far as it goes. The business expansion scheme has been a tremendous success. It is an imaginative tax relief, and it has encouraged an enormous amount of investment in new and existing businesses. Treasury Ministers at the time introduced it against fierce resistance from the Inland Revenue. Indeed, the original proposal was that tax relief would be only at the standard rate of tax. If it had been, it would have been stillborn. It is because it is a generous relief that it is a successful scheme. Can my hon. Friend give the Committee some idea of the amount of investment that has been encouraged by the scheme?

On occasions such as this one knows that there will be some abuse. However, we must consider the net benefit. The Government, quite rightly, when it has been clear that the scheme has been abused, have introduced restrictions on qualifying investment. Overall, it has been a successful scheme. Last year, I was glad when the Government decided to make it a permanent scheme. This relatively modest extension recognises one of the difficulties that has occurred — the bunching of investment and the artificiality that that brings, which my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) described. To some extent, the clause gets to grips with that problem.

It might be helpful if my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary would explain why the figure of £5,000 was chosen. I think that I am right in saying that the maximum relief available to an individual in any one year is £40,000. Having decided in principle that it is sensible to allow carry-back on any investment made in the first six months, there must be a case for saying that, that being half the year, one should allow half the relief to be carried back.

Dr. McDonald: In his Budget statement the Chancellor said:

"Last year I put the business expansion scheme on to a permanent footing. However, the present rules still produce too much end-year bunching of BES investments, and hence may crowd out some projects and lead to bad decisions on others. I propose, therefore, to permit someone who invests in the first half of the year to claim part of the relief against his previous year's income. This will make it easier for companies to raise BES finance throughout the year" — [*Official Report*, 17 March 1987; Vol.112, c.820.]

Of course, that has been expressed in the clause.

If the Chancellor had been a little more frank, he would have said, "We tried to get people to invest in small new companies by offering them tax relief. Of course, because people wanted the tax relief, but not to take any entrepreneurial risk, they were only willing to invest in asset-backed enterprises such as private nursing homes. We did try to sort out the worst abuses last year, so give me some credit for that. However, because BES is seen as just a tax dodge"—hence its popularity, which the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) did not explain— "people have been thinking about investments only in the last three months of the tax year — January, February and March. This has meant that any half-baked scheme can raise cash in that period, but for the other nine months of the year virtually no project, however well thought out or beneficial to the nation, can raise a bean. Therefore, we shall patch up the BES a bit more by allowing people who invest in the period April to September to claim relief against their previous year's income."

The real question, if the Chancellor had been frank, is whether it is sensible to direct a state subsidy to investment according to the tax planning needs of wealthy BES investors — bearing in mind that the Peat Marwick report showed that 85 per cent. of recipients of BES relief were higher rate taxpayers — rather than some wide-ranging criterion such as the need to create jobs or to improve the nation's industrial performance. They are certainly the criteria that we would apply to any money that is given to support industry, whether directly by grant or through tax relief.

The Inland Revenue statistics for the latest year available, 1984-85 — this is from "Inland Revenue Statistics 1986" — show that 61 per cent. of all BES investment went into companies in the service sector, compared with just under 24 per cent. in manufacturing. I mention that, not out of any disrespect for the service sector, but to emphasise that manufacturing needs the greatest Government support. It is the area in which the Government have dismally failed over the past eight years, as we see if we look at the huge losses in the manufacturing sector and note the Government's own forecast of a deficit. Britain has lost one fifth of its manufacturing sector and the Government expect a vast deficit of £8,000 million this year in manufactured goods. Therefore, it is manufacturing industry that needs the greatest support and encouragement if we are to avoid the expected balance of payments deficit this year.

The regional analysis of business expansion scheme money shows that the destination of just over one quarter of it was described as unknown. That cannot be satisfactory for any Government. Perhaps the Economic Secretary has done a little investigative work on this matter since the financial year 1984-85. If he has, perhaps he will tell us the destination of that quarter of BES money. Of the 74 per cent. that was traced, over 62 per cent. went to the prosperous south-east, 5·5 per cent. went to the north and north-west combined and only 1·6 per

[Dr. McDonald]

cent. went to Northern Ireland. Those are extremely worrying statistics. The BES scheme weights the relief that is given at the expense of taxpayers in favour of schemes that have been brought into existence in the south-east of England. The BES does nothing to help the serious unemployment in the north and north-west and in Northern Ireland.

The total BES investment was about £140 million. Assuming that all investors pay tax at a rate of 60 per cent., this represents a Government subsidy of £84 million. That expenditure is large. It is important that £84 million of Government money is properly directed, but there is no indication that it has been. The Department of Trade and Industry figures for regional and general industrial support show a steady fall from £791 million in 1980-81 to £277 million in this financial year. Since 1984 a mere £370 million has been given by way of regional developments grants for eligible capital projects.

The Government have provided relief through a scheme that is heavily concentrated in the south-east. It benefits the better-off taxpayers and, as the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) said, means that tax relief will go to ill-thought-out schemes and will not be of great benefit to anybody except the taxpayers who receive that tax relief.

There must be better ways of spending £84 million. There must certainly be better ways of keeping track of Government money that has apparently disappeared to an unknown destination. I am sure that the Economic Secretary is extremely worried about that—or is he? Perhaps it does not matter if better-off taxpayers, the higher rate taxpayers, benefit from it. It matters only when we are looking at those who receive unemployment benefit or social security benefits.

The Government have allowed money to be spent—tax relief is a form of spending—without proper checks. This is an ill-directed scheme and it is high time that it was examined once again to see whether there are better ways of giving support to industry, especially in the deprived regions. Instead of accepting the assumption made by either the hon. Member for Lewisham, West or the Economic Secretary that this scheme is permanent, I hope that the Minister will think again. He is prejudging the outcome of the general election. This scheme requires careful examination and we need a redirection of that £84 million.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A number of points have been raised during the debate. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) concentrated on her dissatisfaction with the way in which the business expansion scheme works in practice. It is inherent in any scheme of this kind that full information becomes available only gradually. It is important that as more information about past years becomes available to the Inland Revenue the Inland Revenue and Ministers should consider the implications of that. From time to time we should, if need be, make adjustments to the scheme to take account of the information that becomes available. That is what we have done.

6.45 pm

In earlier Budgets we tightened up the focus of the scheme to deal with the problem of asset backing. In this Budget we made the change by way of the clause that we are discussing about the timing of the investment. I do not think that it is an ill-directed scheme. Funds should be available, and are available, through such a scheme to small and growing companies that need the funds for investment. I disagree fundamentally with the hon. Lady that it would be sensible to try to direct the tax relief to a specific sector such as manufacturing. I hope that more manufacturing and other sorts of companies will be able to take advantage of the scheme, expecially in view of the change that we are now making.

The whole of manufacturing industry is becoming increasingly profitable, and that is the best way to encourage the growth of that industry. When that happens, no doubt more companies within it will look for extra finance. The hon. Lady spoke about 62 per cent. of the money being spent on the south-east. The location is determined by the registered office of the company, not necessarily by the operating area of its activities. Therefore, the fruits of the investment may occur anywhere in Britain, and no doubt frequently do.

Mr. Tim Smith: I was not aware of that important piece of information. Many new or very small companies are extremely unlikely to have their registered offices at the same location as their place of operation. Many of these funds raise their capital in London and are London-based and, of course, their registered offices will often be in the London area. However, the investment might well be elsewhere. Can we get a better survey to find out where these businesses actually are?

Mr. Stewart: The more information that we can obtain on the operation of the scheme the better. I have already said that. As the tax relief relates to the investment in the company itself rather than to the activities that are carried out by the company, it is inevitable, as my hon. Friend said, that the figures will come forward on the basis of the registered office of the company.

Dr. McDonald: The Minister speaks about registered offices, but presumably tax relief is given for a specific scheme. Therefore, one surely knows, not just the location of the head office, but the purpose for which the scheme is designed. I spoke about private nursing home schemes. Presumably one knows the location of the various nursing homes for which relief might be given through a scheme of this sort. Is the Minister saying that he has information only about head offices, and has no information about the purposes of the scheme for which tax relief is given? Surely a geographical element must come into the matter, at least for some schemes, if not for every scheme.

Mr. Stewart: The Inland Revenue does not have information on where the activities of a company as a taxpayer take place and whether it operates through the benefit of business expansion scheme finance or through any other scheme. Such information is not available in the form that the hon. Lady seeks.

I have said, and I repeat, that it is important for us to continue to obtain as much information as possible about the scheme as it goes along. The Peat Marwick report referred only to the operation of the scheme in its infancy. I have no doubt that we shall want more information as the scheme develops, especially in the light of the changes that we have made during the past two years, because we shall wish to see the way in which those changes are reflected in the behaviour of investors and, indeed, in the

behaviour of the companies in which the investment is made. I do not think that there is any difference between us about the desirability of such information, but the matter is not nearly so straightforward, or the information so readily available, as the hon. Lady implies.

My hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) raised several points about the proposal in clause 45. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield asked why the figure of £5,000 was chosen for the amount that could be carried back. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West complained that only £5,000 could be carried back, and also that it applied to only half the figure. I should like to comment on those points, but before I do so I should like to mention the actual figures. For 1984-85, which is the latest year for which full data are available, a total of 807 companies benefited from the scheme and the amount raised was approximately £150 million. Information on the following year, 1985-86, is not yet complete. However, the indications are that the figures are likely to be considerably higher than they were for 1984-85.

The Peat Marwick report on those figures concluded that the great majority of those funds would probably not have been raised by other means if the business expansion scheme had not been available. Clearly, the scheme has had an important impact in that respect, and has helped smaller businesses and companies to get going in a way that otherwise would not have been open to them. That fully justifies the initiative that the Government took in introducing the scheme.

Let me now deal with the figures. The evidence for the years completed so far, which is all that we have to go on at this stage, is that 80 per cent. of all investors put in sums of up to £10,000 a year. Therefore, £5,000 will be half the figure that covers 80 per cent. of all investors. Although one might argue for another or a higher figure, it is clear that, in the great majority of cases, the figure of £5,000 will be significant and will cover the amounts involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West made a particular plea on behalf of the funds and said that he thought it would be helpful to have a different regime for the funds because, by their nature, they could spread risk and find investments more readily than could individuals who were looking for direct investments. I beg to differ on that point. I do not in any way wish to denigrate the funds, which have played an important and useful role, but they should not be given special advantages over individual direct investments. In fact, we are in favour of investment of both types. The arrangements that we are now introducing will make such investments easier because, as I have said, it will not be necessary for an individual to wait until the end of the tax year before making an investment that he knows can be set against the taxable income that has already been earned because it fell in the previous year.

Wherever one puts the cut-off date, there is bound to be bunching before the date concerned. However having said that, we shall obviously keep that under review—as, indeed, we have done the entire operation of the scheme so far. As I said in my introductory comments, the provisions will not necessarily remove all bunching, but they will have a significant effect. If, during the first half of a new tax year, someone knows his taxable income for the previous year, he will now, up to a figure of half of £10,000—be able to make an investment that will be usable, retrospectively, for tax credit against the previous year, the earnings for which he should know by that time. That should benefit individuals and fund managers. I do not think that it is beyond the ingenuity of fund managers for the BES to work out the best ways of taking advantage of the new proposal.

Mr. Maples: The point that I was trying to make was that this amendment is of no relevance to the BES funds, for the reason that I gave. I understand that My hon. Friend wants the same tax regime to apply to individuals and to BES funds, but the amendment to the law that he is proposing will not be of any benefit to the BES funds, because in no circumstances will they be able to carry over uninvested funds from the end of one tax year to the first half of the next.

Mr. Stewart: The value of the funds is not only to the companies in which they invest, but to the people who invest in them. To the extent that it is easier for those who invest to make such investments at different times of the year, which they cannot readily do at the moment, the provisions are bound to make it easier for the funds to raise money at times other than later in the tax year. The earlier in the tax year that the funds can raise the money, the longer they have to make the underlying investments themselves. Therefore, although the benefit is not directly available to the funds as a result of what we are doing, the advantages to the investors will, by definition, make it easier for the funds to raise money throughout the year.

I do not want to deny that my hon. Friend has a point in emphasising that there are different considerations between funds and individuals. However, I am not persuaded that we should make a separate regime for individuals and funds, because I am in favour of encouraging individuals also to make direct investments through the business expansion scheme. It should be possible for the funds to gain some of the benefit of the willingness of individuals to make investments in the first half of the year, which are encouraged by the clause, and which otherwise they might be reluctant to make. On that basis, I hope that we shall have my hon. Friend's support, and that of others, for the clause.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 45, order to stand part of the Bill.

Bill (Clauses Nos. 11, 18, 20 to 23, 33, 45, 147 and 160 and Schedule No. 4), reported, with amendments; to lie upon the Table.

CHEVENING ESTATE BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Order [23rd April] relating to the committal of the Chevening Estate Bill *[Lords]* be amended, in line 15, by leaving out the words 'Standing Committee' and inserting the words 'Committee of the whole House'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

6.58 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am delighted that I have been given the opportunity to debate the future role of the University college of Wales, Aberystwyth. The college has a special place in the hearts of the Welsh people as it was the first college of the university of Wales to be established, in Aberystwyth. The institution was built through the efforts of many dedicated men and women and by the scarce pennies that were contributed by the people of Wales over a century ago.

The University college of Wales is held in high esteem for sentimental reasons and because of the excellent academic standards that it has achieved over the years. Many distinguished ex-students, many of them in public life, in education and in industry, are making an important contribution to the wealth and welfare of the nation.

It is with horror, therefore, that we learn of the drastic cuts that were imposed as a result of the Government's higher education policies on all the university colleges in Wales, and on Aberystwyth in particular. As a result, between 1981 and 1986 the University college of Wales suffered cuts of about 22 per cent. in its University Grants Committee grant, which led to a reduction of 20 per cent. in its academic staff and of 22 per cent. in other staff. There are now to be further reductions and the future looks even more bleak.

To cope with continuing financial restraints between 1987 and 1990 and to avoid huge deficits, the college is being forced to make further painful decisions that could involve a reduction, either by amalgamation or closure, of the number of departments from 32 to 22 and the loss of up to 75 academic and non-academic posts. When we consider that this is happening in an institution with about 3,000 students and with fewer than 300 academic staff, the seriousness of the situation becomes obvious to anyone.

Over the past few years the college administration has applied itself to coping with immense difficulties. Expenditure on academic services, administration and maintenance has been cut to the bone. The college has been successful, however, in increasing research income and in attracting a growing number of overseas students. At the same time it has pioneered significant developments in transbinary co-operation, which include working with the Welsh college of agriculture and the college of librarianship in Wales. It is therefore discouraging for all those involved—students, staff and anyone concerned about the future of the college—that decisions affecting an important institution in the heart of Wales should be taken by a centralised committee without sufficient weight being given to the special circumstances of the institution.

First, the college is relatively small but broadly based. It is geographically remote from the other constituent colleges of the university of Wales. Any rationalisation within the university has therefore to be limited because of the practical and geographical difficulties involved, and the need to offer an adequate range of mutually supporting disciplines on the one campus.

Secondly, the college has a special role to play in the cultural and linguistic life of Wales. It has therefore to use a significant part of its resources to accommodate bilingualism and Welsh medium teaching, and to fulfil its obligations as a guardian of Welsh culture.

The college is situated in the heartland of rural Wales and it makes a significant contribution to the economy of that area. It has close ties with the community around it. It is one of the largest employers in an area that is devoid of large-scale industry and business. It is integrated with the life of the surrounding area in a way that few other colleges outside Wales can be. To take away the viability of the college through the implementation of further cuts would be a serious blow to Aberystwyth in terms of jobs and economic prospects. My constituents are aware of this, but their displeasure goes further than that. They are fiercely proud of their university college and of its fine tradition, and anything which diminishes that tradition diminishes us all.

I maintain that the way in which the UGC allocates its funds is grossly unfair to Wales, and especially to the UCW. I do not believe that it takes fully into account the unique character of Welsh colleagues and their special place in Welsh society. The Welsh university tradition is entirely separate from that of England, and this should be taken into account. That is why I share the serious concern of the college at the attitude of the Croham report, which dismisses any idea of a Welsh committee within the UGC. In my view it is essential that such a committee should be set up immediately, as it is the only way to defend the interests of the UCW of Aberystwyth in a climate of dwindling resources and Government indifference to higher education in Wales.

The Government must take responsibility for the serious problems in higher education, because they are starving it of funds. It is demeaning to treat education in terms of profit and loss. I know that it can be demonstrated that Aberystwyth uses its resources with care and responsibility, but the immense contribution that it makes to the community, to Wales and to the world of education cannot be measured in money and its future must be sustained by increased resources and encouragement by the Government.

At this late hour I make a plea to the Minister to reconsider the grants that are allocated by the UGC to the UCW. I hope that she will give the matter favourable consideration and that I can return to my constitutents to say that the future of the college at Aberystwyth is secure for generations to come.

7.7 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North) (Mr. Howells) has presented his case eloquently for the University college of Wales, Aberystwyth. With him, I wish to pay tribute to the UCW's long history of service to the community and to its special place as the senior college of the university of Wales. I recognise with the hon. Gentleman the high esteem in which the college is held within its own area. I recognise also that the funding changes to which the hon. Gentleman has referred that have been introduced over the past five years, the reductions that have gone with them and the policies that underlie them have presented all seven of the colleges in Wales with problems of adjustment. Some of these have been shared with other universities in Great Britain and some have derived from the college's own characteristics.

I am standing here this evening instead of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science with special responsibilities for higher education because he is even now returning from another part of the Principality. My hon. Friend has been visiting University college, Swansea to see for himself how it is coping with change. On a wider front, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and my hon. Friend have had the opportunity of discussing these matters directly with senior members of the university of Wales, and have recently met a deputation from the Association of University Teachers in Wales. We are not unfamiliar within the Department with the matters which the hon. Gentleman has raised, and the Government are not unsympathetic. As Minister of State, I take an interest in higher education so I, too, have been following the matters to which the hon. Gentleman has referred with considerable interest.

The public funds available to universities through the University Grants Committee are the subject of at least three levels of decision, and in Wales there is a fourth, owing to the federal structure of the universities. It is important that these levels are not confused.

The first level is the decision made by the Government on the amount of funding; then the UGC decides on the distribution of grants to universities; then the universities settle their internal distribution. Conventions are attached, quite rightly, to the extent to which the Government comment on the decisions, both of the UGC and the individual universities. Those conventions are designed to protect the autonomy of universities. Because those distinctions are sometimes confused, it is important to be clear about where matters now stand.

The Government have made known their expenditure plans for the current financial year and the following two years. Although they are the subject of review, they at least give some indication of what is in the Government's mind. The UGC has informed universities of their initial basic allocation for the academic year 1987-88 and the provisional allocations for 1988-89 and 1989-90. I stress that it is an initial allocation, because the UGC has held in reserve certain funds for special purposes, including measures to promote rationalisation within and among universities. Universities are preparing academic and financial plans which accord with the level of grant they expect to receive.

Within the university of Wales, a related exercise is being conducted by a special working party on rationalisation. The hon. Member referred to the outcome of the rationalisation working party exercise, the report of which has been passed to the colleges, and to Aberystwyth's outlined academic plan. It would not be proper for me to comment on those documents as they are still in a formative stage. At Government level, both the resources we are providing and the policies outlined in our recent White Paper on higher education, to which the hon. Member referred, demonstrate our firm commitment to universities within a wider higher education system.

Last November my right hon. Friend announced an additional £95 million for universities in the current financial year. Additional funds have been made available following the conclusion of a satisfactory academic pay settlement. That means an increase in funding for universities of some 10 per cent. The benefits of that additional funding and the extra money flowing through the science budget will not be felt immediately, although the benefits of the higher pay are immediate. The funds will not be spread evenly among the universities.

We come to the second level of decision-making; the decisions taken by the UGC. The outcomes of the UGC's resource allocation procedure have been widely misunderstood in Wales as in other parts of the country. It has sometimes been presented, unfortunately, as being discriminatory. It is discriminatory in the sense that it discriminates in favour of research excellence, but it also uses criteria that have been applied fairly to all universities.

Except in respect of certain additional sums made available in recognition of special factors, the UGC's method treats Welsh universities the same as any other universities. I hope that all parties will accept that this is as it should be. All universities, wherever they may be located, should be judged against the same standards, using the same measure of performance.

There is room for debate about what these criteria should be. One criticism levelled against the UGC's allocations is that it tends to favour the larger institutions at the expense of the small ones. Colleges such as UCW are consequently disadvantaged and disfavoured, but that is a matter for the UGC, which has said that it will look at that again, although it appears from the preliminary statistical analysis that smaller institutions generally do not have higher unit costs than larger institutions, I reiterate that the UGC has pointed out its willingness to look further at that.

I should mention two further factors that are relevant to the UCW. The first is the importance of achieving effective rationalisation of provision. That means looking again at the small departments to see whether they are being cost-effective or whether there is a better means of securing academic strength through the concentration of provision.

The Government welcome the lead taken by the university of Wales in promoting and co-ordinating rationalisation among the colleges. I understand that the UCW has the strategic objective of substantially reducing its departments, although that does not imply a corresponding loss of opportunities for students, particularly as it relates to disciplines within larger departments.

The second factor I emphasise is research excellence. The Government have been encouraging the UGC to pursue selectivity in the funding of university research. Selectivity favours those institutions with a proven record of success or where the prospects of success look brightest.

The UGC first introduced more specific selectivity in its grant allocations for the current academic year. In doing so, it made judgments on research quality in 37 subject-related cost centres in every university. Although the UGC was able to identify departments—microbiology, botany and international politics—within the UCW, which were above the national average ranking on research, the college did not fare particularly well from the exercise, but I am glad to see that one of the college's explicit objectives is to improve its research ratings. It intends, in its internal resource allocation procedures, to effect that aim.

The hon. Member talked about the Welsh factors and teaching through the Welsh language. The Government and the UGC recognise the commitment of the university of Wales to Welsh medium teaching and the provision made at Bangor and Aberystwyth. That recognition is given expression in two ways: first, as a special factor, in

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

effect, as an addition to grant in the allocations made to the two colleges and, secondly, in a separate grant made to the university of Wales registry which covers, among other items, the activities of the board for Welsh medium teaching.

The hon. Member made plain his views about the current committee report and how he feels it would be best to deal with universities in Wales. I take note of those views and will report them to my hon. Friend.

I accept that grant levels have not permitted as much expansion of the board's activities as the board and the university would have liked, but equally the past seven years have seen a substantial development of Welsh medium provision and I hope that more will come. I am assured by the UGC that the level of provision, in its calculations, has not been reduced, although, in accordance with the conventions, the separate elements of each university's block grant are not identified.

Some members of the UCW have argued that the college's commitment to Welsh medium teaching imposes upon it the need for a more generous student-staff ratio than might apply in other areas. I accept that that is the case. The purpose of the special recognition made in the UGC's formula is to take account of the additional staffing need. If the present allowance turns out to be insufficient, that matter can be taken up with the UGC.

Another matter about which the hon. Gentleman made a particular point was the relative geographical isolation of Aberystwyth and the fact that it is located in a mainly rural area of disadvantage in terms of its place and other respects. If there is a case to be made, I am sure that the UGC will listen to it with much sympathy.

One possible disadvantage is that the college might be less attractive to overseas students, but that is not entirely borne out by its success in recent years in considerably increasing the number of overseas students. Therefore, the point about it perhaps being in a disadvantaged area with less opportunity to attract people, and being isolated and in difficulties because of its situation and lack of resources is not entirely borne out by what has happened with overseas students.

Over its 115 years, University college, Aberystwyth has demonstrated great flexibility in responding to changing circumstances, and for that we give it all credit. Now is the time for similar flexibility in order to build on the college's strengths and to improve its overall cost-effectiveness. I am confident that the ingenuity and talent of the present generation of academic leaders within the college will be able to match up to the present challenges in the spirit of their predecessors.

Secondary Education

7.21 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak on the Adjournment on reform in secondary education. We should be debating reform not just because change is a good thing for its own sake, but because there is no doubt that education will be a matter for ever-increasing debate, including debate which may well take place during any coming general election campaign.

It is important that all hon. Members should address themselves to the way in which we can get politics—I mean the wrong kind of adversarial politics—out of our education system. I hope later this evening to give an example of the way in which that might be done.

We must be moving to a way forward in education where we can remove the obvious diversions which appear to exist between political parties and, more often, within the education system itself. After all, the education of our young people is one of the most important matters to which the Government and people of the nation must address themselves.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for being prepared to reply to the debate. I hope that she will be able to confirm that, given the present dispute about recent pay talks, the door is open to teachers, administrators and union leaders to discuss the way forward after the interim period through which we are now going. I hope that she will also be able to make a few remarks about the way forward, although I do not propose to devote my speech to the present pay dispute in the teaching profession.

The divisions that exist within education are not helped by the fact that there are at the moment four separate teaching unions. I was a member of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association. They are all perfectly respectable institutions in the sense that they all have a history of support, and many teachers have loyalty to all four of those unions. I have excluded the head teachers' unions, which can be added to my remarks.

All the unions take a different stance at different times —and that they are perfectly entitled to do—but in the longer term we should be looking for less division and for a way in which teachers can be represented by a less diverse group of bodies. In particular, I support the stance of the Professional Association of Teachers, at least in one respect. It has always said, and I support this without hesitation, that—if I may use an outdated term—to take industrial action is not the best way for the teaching profession to put its case.

I want to go on record as saying that the best advice for the majority of teachers who want to do the best for children and for the education service, whatever their political views, is that the way forward should not include the taking of industrial action — working to rule or taking strike action. That is not the best way forward, and I join the many others who are appealing to the members of the teaching profession to think again. It is fair enough that they should have different views and put their case strongly, even — with respect to my hon. Friend the Minister — to disagree with Ministers, but industrial action is not a good way forward and in my opinion, as an ex-member of the profession, it does not achieve the best results.

If anyone had any doubts that change was needed in education, they might have been removed if they had looked at the survey in *The Independent* this morning. It highlighted, as far as I could see without any political bias, the deficiencies in the present system, which is mainly comprehensive. The survey was not criticising the comprehensive system as such. As I understood it, the survey said that, because of all the changes in education since 1945, we have not addressed ourselves properly to what it is we are trying to do in the schools. After all, we are not just trying to get the maximum number of pupils to Oxford, Cambridge or the other universities, or the maximum pass level at GCSE or any other exam; we are trying to decide what skills, qualifications, numeracy, literacy, and so on, we want from our pupils when they come out of the schools. The analysis in *The Independent*, which has been reproduced elsewhere, put that very well and I would recommend not only my hon. Friend the Minister but any other hon. Member to read it.

Let me take a few moments to point to one or two reforms in the secondary education system that I would welcome. I hope that there will be at least a debate, and perhaps action. In any school in any education system there is nothing more important than the quality of the head teacher and the way in which he leads his team of teachers, ancillary staff and pupils.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has obviously been addressing himself to that problem, but I want to encourage the idea of a staff college to provide specialist training for head teachers and potential head teachers. After all, that system works extremely well in the services. I am not suggesting that such a staff college in education should somehow mimic the staff college at Camberley, but there is a strong case for rigorous, meaningful training for head teachers in management and all the other skills that they will need in addition to their teaching skills.

I am not devaluing the teaching skills required by head teachers, because it is good teachers who should be promoted to headships, but they need other skills as well which they may not have had the chance to develop during the earlier part of their careers. For that reason, I again urge the Government and my hon. Friend to respond positively to the idea of a staff college and management training.

Let me pass on to another suggestion that relates to my remarks about the profession, its behaviour and the unions. The majority of teachers have high professional standards and are committed to their work. Indeed, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the schools and to the overwhelming majority of teachers in Norwich who are doing sterling work, far beyond the call of any special contract or written agreement, for the sake of their pupils. That is continuing all the time and must be recognised by hon. Members.

Nevertheless, there is still the problem of industrial action and other actions by teachers which do not have a good effect on their professional status. Therefore, I should like to recommend for serious consideration by the Government the setting up of a professional teachers' council. That is quite distinct from the unions. After all, any body of employees has a perfect right to set up a union under the law, and I shall not comment on that now. But, in addition, we could set up a professional teachers' council which would have the task of setting and monitoring professional standards for members of the teaching profession—whether ensuring that political bias is not introduced into schools, or setting standards or a code of conduct for teachers.

There are many roles that such a body could fulfil, in the same way as the British Medical Association and other bodies perform such functions for doctors and members of the fraternity. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will comment on that, and perhaps suggest that the matter may be considered in the future.

I should now like to move on from the teaching profession to the way in which the secondary school system is now run. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) has joined me, as I wish to refer to a topic that has caused considerable unease among my constituents and his. At present, the local education authority administers the way in which children are allocated to various secondary schools. Of course, there is the Government principle of freedom of choice for parents, but we all know how that works out in practice. Many parents write to me, as their Member of Parliament, saying that they have been unable to secure the school of their choice. They then go on to appeal; but even after they have appealed, the system still seems to work against them. The present arrangement is causing a great deal of unhappiness, which we in Parliament should at least consider, and perhaps try to legislate to remove it.

I recommend to my hon. Friend the Minister serious consideration of the question of open entry to our schools. Anyone who knows anything about education — including my constituents—will know that there are all sorts of snags inherent in such a scheme; but I ask my hon. Friend to consider the matter seriously and see whether those snags can be ironed out. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I should particularly like to see politics taken out of education, and that is one of the reforms that will be necessary if we are to achieve our aim. I believe that entry to a school should be determined mainly through discussion between its head teacher and governors, and indeed members of staff and parents.

While some schools may not necessarily be able to expand fast enough to take all the pupils who want to go to them, it would at least be a step in the right direction if we took the matter out of the hands of the present administrative structure and introduced open entry. We may have to couple that with a change in the way in which funding goes into schools. In the short time available, let me hint at what I should like to see happen.

Under the system I should like to see in operation, a capitation allowance would be paid directly to a school for each child who attended that school. If the school were expanding, there would be at least the possibility of its receiving more money, and putting up extra buildings and employing extra staff to cope with the demand. Many people say that the less good schools that are not so popular will go into a vicious spiral of decline and disappear out of existence. But, from my experience of the independent sector, I do not believe that that will happen. If for any reason a school becomes less popular, it may go into a short-term decline. That, however, presents a challenge to the head teacher, the staff and the governors. They will ask, "What are we trying to do? Why are we not attracting the number of pupils that we are able to take?" After suitable discussion, they will take action to arrest the decline, and the inevitable result will be an improvement of standards all round. That argument, therefore, can be rejected.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way to me, particularly on a point about which I have some feeling and knowledge.

Is my hon. Friend agreeing with the philosophy expounded by the present Government about giving greater autonomy to the governing body of a school for its financial management? As he may know, I was a governor of the Manor school in Cambridge before I moved to Norwich. That school participated in an experiment to give the headmaster and governors greater autonomy in the financial management of the school. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that, if that philosophy were followed — I do not hear many encouraging noises from some teaching unions, but I hope that it will be followed — one of the ways in which governing bodies and teaching staff could attract pupils to their schools would be by having greater independence and more say in how their school is run and how disciplines are operated, and thus being given greater management of their own affairs.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention; I entirely support what he has said. I trust that he will allow me to give an example that illustrates my point — although the matter is out of our hands at present and, indeed, I cannot make any comment on the actual processes involved.

Bowthorpe school, in my hon. Friend's constituency, is now a highly controversial subject, and I am recommending that politics should be taken out of education, not put back into it. However, I will say that, if the open-entry system that I have recommended were adopted—along with the independence of schools and governors referred to by my hon. Friend—any future problem similar to that faced by the Norfolk education committee and the head teachers of Bowthorpe school would be dealt with in an entirely different way. If the roll of a school in the position in which Bowthorpe school has found itself was declining, it would be up to the head teacher and the governors to decide together how to address the problem of decreasing finance, and how to move forward into the future. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that, under such a system, politics would probably be partially—if not totally—taken out of such circumstances.

Let me say in passing how much I welcome the move already made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to devolve more power to head teachers. I do not wish to comment on that in detail, because we have already heard welcome announcements about it.

I referred earlier to pay and possible future negotiations. Let me now make a further point connected with the issue of the independence of head teachers. I should like pay negotiations in the longer run — whatever form they may take in the future — to be mainly concerned with the basic or minimum rates. In the independent sector, head teachers have much more room for manoeuvre on how much they pay individual teachers — possibly because they want to attract more teachers, particularly in shortage subjects such as physics, mathematics, craft design and technology. If we laid down that pay negotiations should address only the minimum levels and gave head teachers more power—as my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South and I both wish — that could be applied to pay as well. That is something that we might consider in the longer term. I should be interested to hear the response of my hon. Friend the Minister, and I hope that she will comment on how we are progressing with the serious shortage of physics and mathematics teachers, about which I have often spoken in the House.

It would be foolish, in my implied criticism of the way in which secondary schools are run, to minimise the severity of the problems posed for local education authorities by the dramatic fall in school numbers since 1979. Hard decisions about administrative reorganisation and school closures have had to be taken. Unfortunately, attempts have been made to pass on responsibility for those problems to the Government. An unholy alliance has been formed between the Labour-led local authorities trying to extort further resources from the taxpayer and teachers' unions seeking pay increases beyond the local authorities' income.

The debate on the future of education is not, therefore, just the product of the recent disruption in the schools. The fundamental problems lie in the structure of the system itself. I have not had time to develop all the changes that I should like to see, but I have referred to some of them. The basic objectives of education are poorly defined at the moment, as was pointed out in this morning's article in *The Independent*. Furthermore, the educational attainments to be sought by pupils are highly obscure. The active and effective participation of parents has been impossible until very recently.

Largely because there is little or no effective freedom of choice for parents or pupils within the state sector, the vested interests in the educational establishment — the civil servants in the Department of Education and Science, the administrators working for the local education authorities, the union leaders and some local authorities have been able — how can I put this courteously, Mr. Deputy Speaker?—to resist positive change. It is for this reason that a whole range of issues, covering the restoration of educational standards, open entry and capitation, the formulation of a national curriculum to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is addressing himself, and about which, if I had had more time, I should have spoken enthusiastically — perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister of State will comment on that point—have been treated as politically taboo.

This is a challenge that the Government and the Conservative party, as we approach the general election, must accept. There must be a fundamentally new strategy for education that draws pupils, parents and teachers into an effective partnership, enlarges the range of choice and provides real freedom in education, while reducing bureaucratic control. That will require clear educational objectives, better administrative arrangements and proper safeguards for the teaching profession. I look forward to my hon. Friend's comments, enthusiastic or otherwise, on what I have said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Lady seek the leave of the House to speak again?

7.44 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady has the leave of the House to speak again.

Mrs. Rumbold: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I respond to the very interesting

points that have been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) about the reform of the education system. I believe, with him, that for too long we have allowed our education system to wander without very much sense of direction. It is important that we have a clearer idea of where we want to go.

I accept with alacrity my hon. Friend's point about the politicisation of some local education authorities. Sadly, one has to look no further than the recently published HMI report on the London borough of Brent to see what happens if a local education authority decides that its priorities are other than the needs of the children for whom it ought to provide a sensible system of education.

The report saddened me, not just because it is apparent that the management of the local education authority has become completely out of touch with the needs of the children, but because I believe profoundly that young people should be served well by the schools that they attend and by their teachers. Therefore, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and my colleagues and I are very worried that children in Brent are not receiving the education to which they are entitled.

My hon. Friend referred to his concern about the action that some teachers are taking on pay and conditions of service. It is worth putting on record yet again exactly what has happened in the last few years. I was a member of the Burnham committee, and according to the records there were 12 pay negotiations. Of those 12 pay negotiations, only three ended in a negative settlement. In the other negotiations, there were interventions, sometimes ACAS had to be brought in, and at one time there was a pay policy. No clear and straightforward settlement was reached in the very unsatisfactory Burnham committee negotiations. Therefore, its passing has not been regretted by anybody.

Apart from the Burnham committee being put out of its misery, equally unsatisfactory arrangements have been in existence for about six years. The local education authorities were supposed to sit down with the teachers unions and discuss conditions of service, but the working party failed to meet on a number of occasions because one or other of the union leaders did not wish to attend the meeting. That shows how impossible it was for the local education authorities and the unions to get together to determine conditions of service.

To put that matter right the Government decided to introduce legislation that would lead to the setting up of an interim advisory committee to look into pay and conditions of service for teachers. At the same time, the Government granted a pay award to teachers which, in this calendar year, amounts to a 16·4 per cent. increase. Taken together with the negotiated arrangements for the immediately preceding period, over 18 months that will amount to a 25 per cent. increase in the basic rate of pay for teachers. By no stretch of the imagination can that be considered to be other than a most generous pay award.

When people look at what is happening now in the schools and see that the major unions are still involved in action because not all of the package is entirely to their satisfaction, they find it hard to understand why, after such a generous pay award, the teachers are not seeking other means to discuss their differences with the Government.

My hon. Friend would obviously like me to say more about how, ultimately, we hope that the pay and conditions of service of teachers will be determined. My right hon. Friend has said on a number of occasions that the interim advisory committee is indeed an interim body and that he does not wish to have to determine teachers' pay and conditions of service. Later this year, therefore, he hopes to open discussions with the teacher unions, the churches, parents and all those who have an interest in education in an effort to find the best way in which rates of pay and conditions of service can be determined. My hon. Friend's suggestion that there should be a professional council for teachers may then be considered.

Of course, we need to look at other matters too. I have a great deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend when he talks about the management of schools. It is of great importance, not only that our schools are clear in their objectives, about what they are in business for, but that they are managed well. The head teachers in our schools have a heavy responsibility. It is not simply a matter of becoming a super teacher. It is also a matter of going into an institution, into a business. One can draw a parallel, as many do, between the management of a school and that of a business, because a considerable degree of management skill is needed for a school to be run effectively. This applies not just to a large comprehensive of 1,500 children or so but to the smallest primary school. The skill of managing how the children are taught and how best to cope with staff is something that many teachers need. It seems to me fair to suggest that an institution or organisation might be set up to provide potential head teachers with the specific management skills needed to run a school.

That leads on logically to the whole question of how schools are governed. When it comes to what Government have already done to ensure that the customers, the parents, are more involved in the schools which their children attend, the 1986 Act, which I am proud to have had a very small part in putting through the House, is the first step in making sure that parents have a firm part in the government and management of schools.

It is not enough, however, just to give parents a role in governing. We must ensure that they have more than a vague idea of their role. They need a clear managment objective when they become governors. It is more than simply going to a few meetings and doing one's duty as a governor in attending and making decisions. There is the whole business of what the school is doing, how its curriculum is managed and whether the funds for which the head teacher is responsible are being well spent. Governors must also consider the ethos of the school and its discipline, because it is the head teacher, on the whole, who is responsible for the ethos of the school. Nevertheless, that can be determined by a strong governing body, and certainly by a strong chairman of governors. So it is not just the training of head teachers but the training of governors that is an important part of the philosophy that we want to develop.

Greater financial delegation to schools has been broached by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who believes that the experiments and pilot schemes currently being run in Cambridgeshire, Solihull and other parts of the country demonstrate clearly that, where schools and, in particular, head teachers, are given the chance to manage the finances, the schools are more likely to be better run and those involved are more likely to feel

[Mrs. Rumbold]

that the decisions taken actually relate to the institution. In this way one can draw together the responsibility of the governing body, the responsibility of the head teacher and the good management of the school much more easily and reasonably.

Earlier today my attention was drawn to a report about furniture in schools. Hon. Members may wonder why I want to talk about furniture in schools, but it seems to me a good example. The report concludes that where furniture is purchased in bulk by people who do not use it themselves, those who use it feel no great responsibility for it, and that the state of the furniture in schools at present is rather deplorable. The Government have taken that into account in their funding of local education in this next financial year. We have given a substantial increase to local authorities, amounting to almost 19 per cent., to allow them to put right furniture and equipment which may not be up to the best standards. Financial delegation, however, would vastly improve the chances of purchasing furniture that was well made and represented good value for money, and once the furniture was installed, governors and head teachers would be much more interested in how it was cared for.

My hon. Friend also touched at some length on the matter of open enrolment. In other words, he developed a theory that is very close to his heart, that it should not be possible for a local authority to restrict, even under the more recent Act introduced by the Government, the number of children going into any given school. He developed the view that if parents had access to the school of their choice, and if that school could take the number of children who wanted to go there, the authority should fund that school according to the number of children attending it.

I understand that philosophy very well. When I was chairman of a local authority, I had on one occasion, because of a vast over-subscription to one extraordinarily popular single-sex girls' school, a very difficult problem. We had about 100 more people wanting to go to that school than we could possibly accommodate. It seemed to us almost impossible to tell 100 sets of parents that their children could not go to that school. To everyone's horror, I went to the headmistress and asked whether it was possible to take two more forms of entry for that particular year. Could she take 60 more girls? She said that it would be difficult, but not impossible, and we managed to accommodate the vast majority of parents who wished their children to attend that school, by the use of a simple methodology, flexibility. Of course, we had to give extra resources to the school and make sure that there were sufficient classrooms, books, and so on, but by being flexible as an authority we met the parents' wishes. That was exactly the right thing to do, in my view.

I note with interest exactly what has happened to Bowthorpe school. I note also my hon. Friend's views on how one could extend entrolment to schools within authorities. I hope that he will accept with me that such a philosophy, which I would welcome, would have to be worked out with our colleagues in local authorities, because it is not something that we would wish to go into unless we were certain that the schools that were not as popular with parents would not suffer dramatically and overnight, since that would jeopardise the education of children already in schools whose popularity was or might be declining.

It is important to point out to my hon. Friend that his philosophy on the way in which he would fund a school depends very much on how good that school is. Schools are chosen by parents for different reasons, but mainly because they have discovered, by the normal process of talking to other parents at the school gate or by talking to their neighbours, why they have chosen certain schools.

For the most part, schools get a good reputation if the leadership is good. Often a good head teacher will make a school greatly desired by parents. It is not always the case that a good head teacher or a head teacher who has created the impression that his or her school is excellent is actually delivering excellent education. Therefore, while one accepts that there should be financial delegation to heads, that open enrolment should be encouraged, and that head teachers should be trained, there is another facet to the reforms that I hope my hon. Friend will accept, namely, the introduction of a basic national foundation curriculum, on which my right hon. Friend hopes there will be a wide national debate.

While all the ideas about management and about how children can get into schools can be discussed at length and can be put into practice, unless what goes on in the schools is coherent, well thought out and based on the best practice, and unless the fundamentals of what children are learning are understood by the people as being valuable, we shall not make any progress in our plan to reform education.

I hope that with those few words I have managed to reassure my hon. Friend that we are talking much the same language and that the Government are studying closely many of the ideas that he has put forward.

Higher Education

8.2 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on higher education in the Adjournment debate, particularly following the Government's recent publication of a White Paper on the subject. That White Paper sets a most encouraging tone for the future of higher education, which I greatly welcome.

Good education, whether at school or in higher education, is one of the most important investments for the future of the individual and of the nation. There is no doubt in my mind that the quality and quantity of higher education will be important factors in enabling the country to develop new products and services from which our businesses and industry can enable the country to flourish.

There is a good story to tell on student numbers. Over the past eight years the number of British students in higher education has risen by more than 85,000 to over 500,000, an increase three times greater than was achieved during the previous decade. This has resulted partly from the peaking of the number of 18 and 19-year-olds in 1982. Perhaps more significant is the steady increase in the number of able young people who wish to take advantage of higher education. With Hatfield polytechnic being only a few miles from Stevenage I am pleased to observe that polytechnics have played a major role in providing for the growth in student numbers.

As regards the future, I am pleased and relieved that the White Paper plans for a growth in student numbers over the next few years and envisages steadily increasing participation. The larger figures now projected are vital if we are to compete effectively as a leading nation in an increasingly competitive world.

There are four areas upon which I should like to dwell briefly: first, the position of polytechnics; secondly, funding for higher education; thirdly, the emphasis on different types of courses; and fourthly, the funding for research in higher education institutions. The polytechnics have clearly established themselves as institutions providing excellent education. Industry values particularly the sandwich courses that are often provided and the close co-operation that frequently exists between the polytechnics and industry and commerce, both in the locality of the polytechnics and sometimes more widely. Again, Hatfield polytechnic has close contacts with British Aerospace, Marconi Instruments, STC and various companies which are able to co-operate with it in producing useful courses for students and also in developing various scientific research projects.

I have noticed at Hatfield and at other polytechnics that there have been strains in the relationship between the polytechnics and the local education authorities. Although the local education authorities frequently regard polytechnics as the jewel in the crown of the spectrum of education for which they are responsible, nevertheless there is a great deal to be said for the proposal in the White Paper of a system of control analagous to that applying to universities. Therefore, the proposal for a polytechnic and college funding council is an important step forward for the future of polytechnics. They will be able to advance even more effectively in such a structure. Quite a few local education authorities have found the polytechnic to be such an unusual item in the education activity in which they are involved that they have not been able to address the problems of the institution effectively. Under the proposals in the White Paper there are much better prospects of polytechnics being treated more satisfactorily.

On the general question of the funding of higher education, concern has frequently been expressed to me and to other hon. Members about the funds being provided to universities, polytechnics and colleges. I understand and sympathise with some of the worries put forward but I also believe that in the 1970s there was much waste in various sectors of higher education, with numerous courses being indifferently controlled and monitored. There is a great need for a much more stringent examination of the financing of courses and of the need for certain courses. Nevertheless, the substantial increase in higher education funding for this year is greatly to be welcomed. Some institutions were finding the pressures very great. Hatfield polytechnic had commented to me on several occasions that with the substantial increase in the number of students, the strains on staffing activities and so on were considerable.

I should like more funds for research, particularly scientific and technological research. There is considerable potential for funding from industry and commerce. To encourage the provision of such funds more imagination should be shown to ensure better co-operation between higher education institutions and industry and commerce. A number of higher education institutions have complained to me that if they are successful in obtaining extra funds perhaps their funding from the local education authority or Universities Grants Committee has been adversely affected. That is hardly an encouragement for higher education institutions to seek to co-operate more.

The final point concerns priorities and emphases on different types of courses being provided in higher education. Criticisms have been made that the Government were taking a philistine position in urging that larger numbers should be educated in mathematics, certain sciences and technologies, and perhaps relatively fewer in the more abstruse subjects. I reject these criticisms. With half a million students in higher education, it seems perfectly sensible to encourage the expansion of those activities that will be most directly relevant to the various needs that industry may have in this country in the coming years.

A total of 500,000 people are in higher education—a large number. Those young people must be encouraged to pursue courses and to develop ideas in areas that will benefit both them and the country as a whole in the future. Therefore, I hope that the Government will not be deterred — and the White Paper suggests that the Government are not being deterred—from making sure that the priority will be to encourage higher education being well directed to the future needs of the country, its industry and commerce.

8.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): I am glad to respond to the positive and forward-looking speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood). He has been a lecturer in high-tech subjects with one of our largest firms, and he is talking from personal knowledge and a more general interest. The Hatfield polytechnic is very close to Stevenage. I was there recently and I had an opportunity to discuss with the deputy director some of

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the problems and prospects facing that institution. My general impression was of optimism and forward-looking attitudes.

My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of polytechnics in higher education. Polytechnics have improved their efficiency greatly and are now a major part of higher education. The Government has been following with gratitude the efforts that polytechnics have been making to accommodate more students.

My hon. Friend next raised the question of funding. Last year we increased funding for polytechnics and colleges by 8·5 per cent., which is well over the current rate of inflation.

The third point my hon. Friend dealt with was research in the polytechnic system. Although there has been a lot of contact between polytechnics and industry, as in the universities, we recognise—as do other members of the educational and business communities — the need to expand contacts between education and industry. We have seen positive proof of this expansion in the polytechnics, in increased investment, industrially related development, and also a major increase in the role of the provision of training by the polytechnics.

Government policy in this regard is to do everything we can to encourage these developments. That is the reason why we set aside last year £15 million to be directed specifically to encouraging a number of initiatives, including research in polytechnics. We were careful to stress, as we shall continue to stress, that the sort of research that we want to be pursued in polytechnics and colleges must be of the applied variety and closely associated with industry. This has been accepted by the polytechnic community. The sums that we offered, which in effect doubled the amount of finance available for research, were applied for by many polytechnics and colleges. Our philosophy is to encourage contacts with industry by encouraging polytechnics to bid with a business plan for the available funds.

Finally, my hon. Friend mentioned courses and the pattern of courses between the arts and sciences in higher education. There is a widespread misconception that this Government have a philistine attitude to education and to higher education in particular. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only do we not underestimate the contribution of the arts and humanities but, in simple figure terms, such has been the expansion in the number of students since 1979 that there are now not only far more students doing science-related courses than ever before, there are also more students doing arts-related courses. Since 1979 we have increased student numbers by 160,000 full and part-time. We hope now to add to that another 50,000.

Whereas I welcome the stress that my hon. Friend placed on the need for vocationally orientated courses, particularly in science-related subjects, I am sure he agrees with me that the humanities — whether languages, economics, business studies, or humanities in their purer form, the classics, or whatever—have a very important role to play in higher education, both for their own value in themselves and also for training the mind in rigour and dexterity.

I am glad to have had this opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend's points. I share his optimism about the future of higher education in this country in general and about the new prospects that the White Paper offers for polytechnics in particular.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 1 May 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR PREMISES

Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Ridley and Mr. Tim Eggar presented a Bill to make provision as to what land is diplomatic or consular premises; to give the Secretary of State power to vest certain land in himself; to impose on him a duty to sell land vested in him in the exercise of that power; to give certain provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations the force of law in the United Kingdom by amending Schedule 1 to the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964 and Schedule 1 to the Consular Relations Act 1968; to amend section 9(2) of the Criminal Law Act 1977; and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time: and ordered to be read a Second time on Tuesday 5 May and to be printed [Bill 145.]

Licensing (Amendment) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

9·36 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order concerns our procedures. I do not know whether there is any precedent, but in my long years I have never known a Bill such as the one before us today which has been rushed through—not by the sponsors—with such indecent haste. It was reported late on Wednesday evening and is to be considered as first business today, but hon. Members wishing to table amendments were unable to obtain a printed copy of the amended Bill. I asked for one yesterday but could not obtain one. The printed copy was simply not available.

The Bill is not lengthy, but it is highly technical and, as I hope to show later, has grave implications for our society in terms of child protection, road safety, and so on. The House may consider this justifiable, but the Bill makes a very serious breach in established licensing procedures. Despite the handicap that I have mentioned, I managed to put down a number of amendments which you, Mr. Speaker, in your wisdom, have seen fit to select. Had the printed Bill been available, I and other hon. Members might have been able to put down other amendments, but we have been hindered in that respect.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, as guardian of the rights of all Back Bench Members, for your guidance as to whether such casual, inefficient and inconsiderate arrangements, which clearly militate against proper consideration on Report, should be allowed to obtain in future.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the point raised by the right hon. Gentleman. The Bill was indeed reported on Wednesday. There are few opportunities for hon. Members with private Members' Bills and today is a day on which remaining stages are taken. Bearing in mind the fact that the Bill was reported only on Wednesday, I have been generous to the right hon. Gentleman and have selected amendments which were starred. I think, therefore, that the Bill should proceed.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I intervene at this stage as I suspect that you are about to move to another point.

You, Mr. Speaker, have just ruled in reply to the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). Could you tell us the precedent for that ruling? I have not been able to establish it, but I am sure that you did that work before coming to the House today. I believe that the House is entitled to know what the precedent is, because we have been approached by a number of organisations asking how it is possible for Parliament to debate these matters in this way. I have given assurances that we shall seek to establish what the precedents are. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker. will be most forthcoming and will wish to advise the House before we proceed with the Bill. Otherwise, people will wonder what we are doing in this place.

Mr. Speaker: This is a private Member's day. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are 12 such Fridays in a Session when Bills have precedence; the first six are for Second Readings and the latter six are for remaining stages. The promoter of the Bill has, as is his right, chosen today to debate its remaining stages. I took into account

[Mr. Speaker]

the fact that the Bill was reported only on Wednesday, and I have been generous in my selection of amendments. I think that we should proceed.

New Clause 1

Effects of Variation Orders

'The Home Office, the Department, of Health and Social Security and the Department of Transport shall monitor the effects of variation orders on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems with regard to public order, road safety and health in the administrative counties of England and Wales.'—*[Sir B. Braine.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Bernard Braine: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 6, in page 2, line 20, after second 'or', insert 'road'.

Sir Bernard Braine: The Bill seeks to change our licensing law in ways that will affect drinking habits, some say beneficially and many say adversely. But we can all agree on one matter. Licensing is no longer solely a matter of law and order for the Home Office. It has implications for health, child welfare and road safety. The new clause would ensure that not only the Home Office but the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Transport will monitor the effects of variation orders on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems with regard to public order, health and road safety in the administrative counties of England and Wales.

New clause 1 would be a constructive amendment to the Bill to which all hon. Members could assent. Our previous debates revealed sharp differences of view on the desirability and likely effects of the Bill. The new clause is non-controversial, in that it proposes merely that, if the Bill is enacted, its effects should be properly monitored. I see no reason why anyone should object to that.

I shall proceed by establishing the case for monitoring the social and health effects of variation orders. I shall then outline precisely what should be monitored and how and by whom monitoring should be undertaken.

The Bill's supporters have told us repeatedly that it is a modest measure that will benefit society in terms of social convenience and will bring licensing law more closely into line with contemporary patterns of work and leisure without adversely affecting the prevalence of alcohol misuse. Indeed, they suggested that it would reduce alcohol-related harm in society. They cite the experience in Scotland since licensing reform in support of their argument.

Opponents of the Bill include the British Medical Association—which has written to me making clear its stand on the subject—and many other expert bodies. We believe that the Bill would have a markedly adverse effect and would increase the extent of alcohol-related problems, and we are not convinced that the experience in Scotland since reform has been as positive as the Bill's supporters claim.

I do not pretend that it is possible to come to a definitive view on the matter. It is a matter of argument, the flavour of which was provided by a letter from the director of the alcohol studies centre at Paisley which was published in the *Glasgow Herald* of 10 January. It states:

"Mr. Laing (a Glasgow Herald journalist) quotes Dr. Clayson who suggests that Scotland is still worse off than England and Wales in terms of levels of harm, but notes that we are only twice as bad instead of three times as bad. It is likely that the 'closing of the gap' is owed in part to the recession which, it can be argued, has hit Scotland harder than England and Wales and an increase in the real price of alcohol in 1981 made alcohol more expensive and had some effect on levels of consumption and related harm. Indeed, the Government's own survey"——

to which there will be frequent reference during the debate——

"agrees that there has been an increase in alcohol consumption in Scotland since 1976, offset by the effects of the recession. Since 1976, deaths from cirrhosis of the liver in Scotland have increased almost three times the rate experienced in England and Wales. Drinking and driving charges have increased by more than 60 per cent. since 1976. Are these consistent with claims of success?

We often hear that changes in the law have resulted in less drunkenness. There is no doubt that charges of drunkenness since 1976 have decreased by 27 per cent., but charges for breach of the peace (mostly involving drinking) have increased by 16 per cent., charges of petty assault have increased by 20 per cent., as well as the already mentioned increase in charges for drunken driving."

9.45 am

That letter shows clearly the issues about which there has been so much argument and which are still in dispute. New clause 1 would give Parliament the opportunity to examine the effects of licensing law reform on public health, public safety and public order. The country would know that the new legislation was on trial. No precedent would be set because, following the passage of the Defence of the Realm (Liquor Control) Regulations in 1915, the Central Liquor Control Board was established to monitor their operation and effects.

In relaxing controls on alcohol, with the inevitable effect of increasing the hours of sale, great caution must be exercised. We must monitor closely the effects of new legislation, and new clause 1 implies that it would be possible to reverse the legislation if it proved to be detrimental.

The wise advice of Professor Robin Room, who is an American authority on alcohol problems, should be carefully heeded. He said:

"It has been fashionable to decry the complexity of the system"—

the alcohol beverage control system—

"in its current form, to point to the inconsistencies"—

in legal provision—

"from one place to another, and simply to assert the ineffectiveness of alcohol control laws as a strategy of prevention. There is always a strong temptation to conclude that a longstanding law is ineffective, since its failures will tend to be apparent while its successes remain hidden. But the only true test of the effectiveness of laws is to see what happens when they change."

The purpose of new clause 1 is to apply that test. If fears of increased consumption and harm resulting from the Bill are unfounded, its supporters have no reason to be alarmed by what I propose. Indeed, they should welcome the new clause. But its justification is the danger that the Bill will have detrimental effects, so it is vital that proper steps are taken now to ensure that, although the Bill is a step in the dark, its effects can be measured and adjustment made.

The grounds for believing that there is at least the danger, if not the certainty, of harm resulting from the enactment of the Bill are incontestible. It is a sad fact of life that good intentions are not enough. I accept unreservedly that the intentions of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) are the best. But I cannot forget that when the licensing law was reformed in the past, also with the best of intentions, there were highly unfortunate consequences. The Beerhouse Act 1830 was a prime example. Motivated by a desire to turn people from drinking gin to drinking beer, Parliament extended the available outlets. Mr. Calvert, a famous London brewer, said in the House that the title of the Bill should be amended to an "Act for the increase of drunkenness and immorality". Despite arguments and warnings the Bill was given a Second Reading by 245 to 29 and was carried in its subsequent stages by a substantial majority. However, two weeks after the Act came into force, Sydney Smith, the great wit of the day, who had been a vigorous advocate of the measure, wrote despairingly:

"The new beer Bill has begun its operations. Everybody is drunk. Those who are not singing are sprawling. The sovereign people are in a beastly state."

Four years later, the House passed a Beerhouse Act 1834, which did not improve matters—Parliament had not left its options open. At the same time, a Select Committee was appointed to examine the extent, causes and consequences of drunkenness and excessive drinking in the United Kingdom. It reported a grave situation, but it took the House of Commons until 1869 to act on the report, and to redress the problems caused by the 1830 Act.

We should learn a lesson from history. It would surely be wiser to adopt my modest, cautious clause, and to give the present measure a trial period of five years. I notice that two former Ministers with responsibilities for health, my hon. Friends the Members for Eastwood and for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) are present—I was one myself, once upon a time—and I should be interested to hear what they have to say on this subject later.

After all, we have been warned by the World Health Organisation, which has given a number of illustrations of the outcome of increased consumption. That organisation, monitoring the rise in alcohol consumption the world over, has concluded that its member states must reduce their levels of consumption by the 1990s by at least 25 per cent. In this country, consumption has doubled in the past 30 years. It is still increasing and will increase further as a result of this liberalising Bill; that will inevitably cause more harm to health.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman has referred to consumption doubling, but I want to know what that means. Has it doubled in terms of quantity, alcoholic content or the amount of money spent on it? Has it doubled in terms of a particular drink — has beer consumption doubled or has wine consumption trebled? The right hon. Gentleman made a very general statement and I am sure that he would not want to slip through the matter without being far more specific.

Sir Bernard Braine: I would be delighted to be more specific, but I have much to say. The short answer is that we are drinking twice as much today as we did 30 years ago. It is as simple as that. I cannot give the specific answer, but the hon. Gentleman has my word as a former chairman of the National Council of Alcoholism and as the president of the Greater London Alcohol Advisory Service that my statement is correct. Those of us who have studied these matters know that experience has shown the efficacy of using hours of opening to control levels of consumption, drunkeness and cirrhosis of the liver.

The Erroll report reviewed two periods in our history —the 1915 measure of restriction and the 1961 measure of liberalisation. Of the 1915 measure, the report concluded reluctantly:

"This is one case where changes in the law relating to the number of outlets, permitted hours and conditions of sale may have a perceptible effect."

By golly, it had a perceptible effect. Of the 1961 Act, and the trends in drunkeness that followed, the Erroll report said:

"There is little evidence in our view to suggest that the Licensing Act 1961 had the overall effect of accelerating these upward movements."

Many experts would not accept Erroll's claim that the 1961 liberalising measure had not had an adverse effect. One of the basic criticisms of the Erroll report was of its unsure handling of research data and its rejection of such data when it did not accord with the common sense ideas of the committee. The composition of the committee was lacking in health and public safety experts and overloaded with retailers.

It is relevant to recall an article by one of the committee's members in the *Financial Times*, in November 1972:

"We all knew, in outline, where we stood when we first met that April day in the large high-ceilinged room in the Home Office opposite the cenotaph. What we wanted, basically, was total freedom for all, to drink when and where we liked . . . There was nothing we had in common, to slant our views, but we were as I have said, liberal-minded.

That liberality began to be eroded right from the beginning. For one thing, a special survey commissioned for our exercise, proved to us that, on the whole, the people of Britain were quite happy with the laws as they are and didn't particularly envisage any need for change.

That shook our faith in liberality quite a lot. Then we began to argue, people might not know that the new could be better than the old as long as they were used to the old ways.

We had to think at least 10 years ahead, perhaps even 20. Legislation cannot be continually changed after all."

In short, if research findings were not convenient to the preconceived ideas of the Erroll committee, they were dismissed. It was almost as if one had turned up at a meeting for which the secretary had already written the minutes.

If there is to be monitoring, it is imperative that it be free of the prejudice shown so blatantly by the Erroll committee. If changes in the law were monitored in the same way as they were by the old Central Liquor Control Board, in five years we would have the facts and experience to come to a rational decision about the role that opening hours should play in alcohol prevention and control policies. We would be legislating on lines confirmed by careful social investigation and not merely on the whims and fancies of a few individuals.

What should be monitored? First, it is vital to monitor closely the levels and patterns of alcohol consumption because of the known relationship between the level of alcohol consumption and the extent of alcohol misuse in society. Secondly, it is necessary to monitor alcohol-related problems, of which there are basically, two general types. There are problems that arise from intoxication, and from heavy consumption.

Problems relating to intoxication include domestic violence, child neglect and abuse, accidents, public drunkenness, criminal damage, assault, drinking and

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driving, psychological disturbances such as depression and attempted suicide, and physical problems such as acute alcoholic poisoning, gastritis, hepatitis and cardiac arrhythmia.

Problems related to regular heavy consumption of alcohol include marital break-up, unemployment, fraud, debt, homelessness, psychological problems such as changes in personality, amnesia, dementia and the misuse of other drugs and physical problems such as cirrhosis, liver cancer, cancer of the head and neck, nutritional deficiencies, diabetes, cardiomyopathy, strokes and brain damage. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton will wish to say something about these matters later.

In case there is any question, the source of these lists of alcohol-related ailments is a recent report of the Royal College of General Practitioners, entitled "Alcohol—A Balanced View". There is no need to elaborate on this aspect. It is clear that there is a wide range of problems, the prevalence of which in the population is certainly measurable.

How should consumption be monitored, and by whom? The three most important Government Departments affected by changes in the licensing laws are the Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Transport. As far as I can see only one of those Departments—the Home Office—is represented on the Front Bench today, by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. I am speaking as chairman of the all-party Committee on drugs misuse, which spans both Houses of Parliament, and I should like to pay high tribute to the Government, particularly to the Department of my hon. and learned Friend, for setting up the inter-Departmental committee that co-ordinates our war against hard drugs. Why should the same approach not be taken to alcohol? I leave my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton to develop that theme because I know that he feels strongly about it.

If the Government were able to establish such a system, it would soon become apparent whether variation orders granted under the Bill were having an effect on the level of alcohol-related problems, and if the system were to be effective, four requirements would have to be met. The three relevant Departments would need to set up an inter-departmental committee to co-ordinate the exercise. Secondly, social impact surveys would have to be carried out. These would assess the level and extent of alcohol-related problems in relation to the variation orders. The surveys would analyse the problems and provide information about the attitude of people towards alcohol-related problems and the effect of them. It is obvious that the process should start before any variation orders are granted. It would be a major handicap to researchers, would it not, both now and in future if they did not have accurate baseline data on the current state of alcohol-related problems and the public's attitude to the granting of variation orders.

10 am

Thirdly, it is critical that the monitoring process be regular and consistent and not spasmodic and erratic. Social impact surveys need to be published every two years. Monitoring must not be an indeterminate, indefinite process without any conclusion.

Fourthly, the monitoring process must ascertain regional variation in the patterns of alcohol use and misuse. Each administrative county in England and Wales should be treated separately so that a more accurate picture of the relationship between problems and variation orders can be established. In my judgment this should not impose an impossible burden on the three Departments. Increasingly data on alcohol-related problems are being gathered. District health authorities should be able to provide information on the incidence of alcohol-related injuries, accidental and non-accidental, as recorded by accident and emergency departments in a given locality by the hour of day and by the day of the week. It is most helpful to our purpose that health authorities are already improving their capacity to measure what is happening by using means such as hospital activity analysis data and the numbers of patients with alcohol-related disease who are treated in hospitals. Such systems can clearly be employed to ascertain the impact of the Bill's proposals on admissions to hospitals.

Similarly, agencies providing counselling services to problem drinkers and their families should be able to provide important information on the way in which changes in opening hours in a locality relate to patterns of consumption and misuse.

I re-emphasise that all partiality in this process must be avoided. To that end it is imperative that none of the research that is conducted should be funded by the alcohol industry. We cannot and must not allow a process to develop where researchers are funded by those who have a strong vested interest in their findings. Moreover, whatever form the monitoring process takes, the public health and social well-being of the community require that the results of the researchers' work should be made widely available to academics and to Parliament.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman has referred to research being carried out by various organisations. Is it true that the Scotch Whisky Association spends a vast amount on research in this area, and does so in the knowledge that the findings will be helpful to the promotion of its causes, or is that a misrepresentation of its position? I understand that researchers are being paid by the association and that others treat their work with some suspicion because of the clear linkage between the industry and their work.

Sir Bernard Braine: I agree with the last part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but I do not think that it is true that the leaders of the drinks industry find moneys for research solely to advance their own interests. I think that there is a genuine concern within the industry to minimise the amount of harm that its product causes on the fringes. Alcohol is something that most of us enjoy in moderation, but it happens to be a potent drug that we know impairs health and shortens life. It is all a matter of balance. I do not altogether accept what the hon. Gentleman says, but I think that Parliament should insist that the drinks industry should have no hand in the sort of monitoring that I am talking about. Parliament must have the facts, and they must be presented to it objectively.

Making alcohol more freely available means taking a risk. If we vote the Bill into law, the very least that Parliament can do is establish a comprehensive monitoring process that will bring the facts to light and inform all those with responsibilities for public health, public order

and public safety. Both supporters and opponents of the Bill have declared that they do not want an upsurge in the level of problems arising from alcohol misuse. I believe that to be an expression of sincere concern. If it is sincere, it can best be demonstrated by voting to include the new clause in the Bill.

New clause 1 is linked with amendment No. 6, which is concerned specifically with drinking and road safety, and I shall now address myself to the amendment. Licensing law has a direct bearing on road safety. During the first world war Parliament was deeply concerned about the impact of alcohol on the level of efficiency of munition workers. The shell shortage was a crucial factor in politics and in the waging of the war itself in France. that resulted in the defence of the realm regulations, which drastically reduced public house opening hours. In 1987 the House should be concerned about the impact that the availability of alcohol makes on road safety. The scene is entirely different from what it was 30, 50 or 60 years ago.

Liquor licensing is no longer the concern of the Home Office alone. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, who thinks deeply about these matters, would agree with that. The issue of road safety brings wider considerations to bear in liquor licensing, especially in relation to permitted hours.

My bible on this subject is the Blennerhassett report, which shocked the nation. Paragraph 1.1 states:

"Alcohol accounts for at least one in ten of all deaths and injuries on the roads and its share is growing. The success of the Road Safety Act 1967 sharply, but only temporarily arrested this deplorable trend. The proportion of drivers killed in accidents who have a blood alcohol concentration above the legal limit is higher than it has ever been.

Paragraph 1.3 reads:

"The fall in casualties—which was largely accounted for by a reduction of a third in accidents between ten at night and four in the morning—has since worn off. Before the Act, 25 per cent. of drivers who died in accidents had over 80mg/100ml of alcohol in their blood. This fell to 15 per cent. in 1968, but was back to 26 per cent. by 1971, and had risen to 35 per cent. by 1974."

This is a reflection of the increase in consumption that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was asking about a few moments ago.

Paragraph 1.3 continues:

"The deterioration in the position is particularly marked among young male drivers; by 1971 40 per cent., and by 1974 45 per cent., of those in their twenties who were killed were over the legal limit. Drinking and driving was one of the commonest circumstances leading to death in this age-group."

I ask the House to note the time of day when so many accidents occur, which is after public houses have closed. The position has not altered and that was confirmed by the Minister with responsibilities for roads and traffic in a written reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 28 April. The Blennerhassett report went on to put that in the context of the availability of alcohol. Paragraph 2.9 states:

"There is a clear link between road accidents and social activities. The level of accidents is high after 10 in the evening, and increases dramatically on Friday and Saturday nights; other evidence shows that alcohol is a factor in far more accidents at these times than during the rest of the day. Those involved are almost all male because men drive and drink more than women. They are predominantly young, but this is partly because young people go out more than others. The result is that road accidents cause half of all male deaths between the ages of 15 and 24 and the largest factor in these casualties is alcohol."

We know that, today, this age group comprises the heaviest drinkers in the population. The ownership of motor cars is fast increasing among them. Where do they do their drinking? In the pub? But how do they get there? By car. How do they get away from the pub? They get away by driving. Any magistrate setting a variation order must take into account whether an extension of hours will exacerbate the problem. A magistrate, in fixing a variation order for the terminal hour, must surely consider how the public are to get home from a public house. Are they to go home by foot, some form of public transport, car, taxi, motor cycle or bicycle? If public transport closes down at 11 pm or 11.15 pm, how do people get home?

If the Bill had been accompanied by measures to deter drunken drivers by raising the likelihood of their being apprehended for drinking and driving—stiffer penalties and more appropriate charges being brought if someone is killed or maimed by a drunken driver—some of our fears might have been allayed. I have heard no clear evidence that the situation in Scotland has been improved by the 1976 reforms. We have all received a broadsheet from the Campaign Against Drinking and Driving. Every hon. Member should receive a copy. It states:

"*(a)* Scotland has the highest road casualty rate in Great Britain. This is confirmed in a letter to a CADD victim family from the Scottish Home and Health Dept (4.12.86) 'the number of deaths and injuries . . . remains higher than elsewhere in Britain.'

(b) Scotland has the worst road fatality record in Europe.

(c) Scotland has a higher average blood alcohol concentration in drink drivers than in England and Wales (67 per cent. in excess of 150 mg as compared with 58 per cent. in England and Wales)."

I have been informed by the campaign that, in his reply to it, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood said that he considered that flexible hours enable the drinker to pace his consumption and reduce the practice of heavy drinking just before the closing hour. I do not see how that affects alcohol impairment in relation to driving. I concur with the campaign's conclusion that: Even if extended hours encourage more leisurely drinking, it is of little relevance to drinking and driving. More leisurely drinking may or may not reduce drunkenness, but in relation to driving even modest quantities of alcohol can be dangerous. Indeed, the Minister with responsibility for roads and traffic, who has made a great impact on the public consciousness in regard to drinking and driving, said:

"Even one drink can kill."

That view formed the basis of his highly commendable Christmas 1986 campaign.

One feature of the Bill that causes me deep concern is the encouragement that it will give to continuing drinking through the afternoon. The afternoon from 3 o'clock to 6 o'clock is the peak time for all road traffic accidents, but at present it is the period during which traffic accidents involving raised blood alcohol levels are less likely. I repeat that because it is crucial to understand it. It is the period during which accidents involving a raised blood alcohol level are less likely. Why is that so? It is because public houses are closed.

There is no evidence from Scotland to show whether the change in the law there has improved or worsened the situation, or has had no effect at all. Unfortunately, we cannot get comprehensive figures from the Government about the number of innocent victims who have been killed by drunken drivers in Scotland before and after the 1976 Act. I understand that the figures were not properly

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compiled before the Act. Again, the Campaign Against Drinking and Driving appears to have been closely following the deliberations of the Standing Committee that considered the Bill. It advises that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office

"claimed that statistics in relation to availability and drinking hours had been analysed and shown no adverse effects on road safety. He then conceded that the relevant statistics do not exist and it was therefore impossible to prove the matter one way or another. In fact, Mr. Waddington had to admit that statistics"——

10.15 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I remind my right hon. Friend of what I said in that regard. I said that statistics relating to drivers killed while over the legal limit, which are the Department of Transport's measure of drinking and driving, have been collected in Scotland only since 1978, but the figures since then suggest a generally downward trend. So there is no particular reason to think that licensing changes in Scotland have had an adverse effect. That is what I said.

Sir Bernard Braine: If one is not in possession of the figures relating to the period before the Act, it is impossible to arrive at such a conclusion. The House will form its own conclusion on the subject.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister of State made a telling intervention. Obviously the Department feels defensive about the matter and wishes to present that case. Is it not true that, when examining figures relating to recorded offences, we must also take available resources into account? It may be that, due to heavy unemployment in Scotland, more and more police resources are increasingly given over to other areas of public control. If we were to examine the reports of the——

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Rubbish.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman said, "Rubbish," from a sedentary position. I wish that he would get to his feet to make interventions of that sort. Perhaps we could then debate this important matter. Can he give me an absolute assurance that every police authority in Scotland, with its hand on its heart, can say that it has adequate resources in every way to monitor fully the number of people who drive with excess alcohol in their blood? He may wish, during the course of the debate, to give that assurance. I cannot give such an assurance for my county. I do not believe that any hon. Member from anywhere in England can give such an assurance. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is in a special position. It appears that he does not wish to intervene any more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I should make it clear to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) that the House cannot have interventions within an intervention.

Sir Bernard Braine: A moment ago, my right hon. and learned Friend accurately reflected what he said in Standing Committee. It is quite right. Put another way, he told the House that statistics in relation to the matter had not been collected in Scotland prior to 1978. The campaign went on to state:

"How can uncollected statistics be analysed and used to show that there have been no adverse effects from changes in the law on permitted hours in relation to drinking and driving? We have heard of governments tuning statistics but this is a camouflage hiding the fact that there are no statistics."

The reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for roads and traffic to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) shows that the relevant figures could not, even now, be instantly produced. The hon. Member asked the Secretary of State for Transport

"how many road users, including pedestrians, pedal cyclists and children, were killed or injured on the roads by a driver with a raised blood-alcohol level; and if he will provide distributions of casualties and rates by hour of day, for 1975 and 1985 separately, for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* for England and Wales."

Hon. Members must remember that that was when the Standing Committee was considering the matter. The Minister replied:

"I shall answer this question shortly."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1978; Vol. 114, c. *71*.]

In other words, he will answer it after Report and Third Reading. That is disgraceful.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I put it to the right hon. Gentleman that it might be very difficult to answer that question. There are many incidents of motor cars being driven by people who can only be described as drunk and who hit people and then drive off, and they are not reported. Whatever figures the Department produces to strengthen its case—I understand that the Department is a closet supporter of the Bill—it can never take those numbers into account. Indeed, in past months, there have been a number of reports in the national newspapers of precisely that. If I remember rightly, only a few weeks ago an ITN news bulletin referred to a hit and run case. There may well be thousands of such cases each year in which people are drunk, yet manage to get away because they refuse to stop.

Sir Bernard Braine: I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman, but we were told by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister that statistics are being collected in Scotland. I am saying—this is relevant to the debate on this measure—that the information should have been available to the Standing Committee. I asked for it at the outset of the Standing Committee's sittings, but it was not provided. That information must be available to the House before it extends hours and does away with the afternoon break. It is disgraceful that information of that kind, which is crucial to an understanding of the problem and which touches on the safety of men, women and children, was not provided. We are talking about what will happen because of the disappearance of the afternoon break, with people who have been drinking all through the day coming on to the roads when children are coming home from school. It is disgraceful that such information was not available to the Standing Committee.

Magistrates need to be informed of the possible consequences on road safety of variation orders. Parliament would fall short of its duty to safeguard the health and safety of our citizens and, in respect of the afternoon, of children in particular if it did not insist on this measure. The families of innocent victims of drinking and driving expect us to do our duty. For that reason, we should support amendment No. 6.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps it would be helpful if I were to inform the House that the need to reprint the Bill has resulted in the line numbers of the

amendments beginning with amendment No. 4 being incorrect. A corrected version of the Amendment Paper is now available in the Vote Office. The change does not apply to the new clause or to amendment No. 1, but it applies to the following amendments.

Sir Bernard Braine: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a revelation. Before you took the Chair, Sir, I raised, on a point of order, the question of the indecent haste with which this matter has been brought before the House and the fact that the reprinted Bill was not available yesterday. Do you have information that similar mistakes have not occurred elsewhere in the papers that are supposed to be before us?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The matter has been checked. I am assured that the amended Amendment Paper is now accurate. As I have informed the House, it is now available in the Vote Office.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I commend my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) for the way in which he moved the new clause and spoke to amendment No. 6, and for his energy and eloquence in opposing the Bill.

I should like to speak in favour of new clause 1. I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) will say that he is disposed to accept it. Unlike all the other amendments, with the possible exception of amendment No. 12, it does not seem to me that the new clause or the amendment do any injury to his objectives. All the amendment and the new clause seek to do is to require three Government Departments to monitor the impact of the change that he seeks.

Although the amendment and the new clause are directed at Government Departments, it is fair to ask my hon. Friend whether the brewing industry and the trade will co-operate. If we are to monitor the impact of variation orders on consumption as well as on alcohol-related problems, the trade will have to co-operate in making essential information available to the three Government Departments. For example, to monitor the impact of the variation orders, the Departments concerned may want to know at what time alcohol is sold. They will not have that information. Will my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood assure us that the industry will co-operate and make available information that is essential to carry out the necessary research?

We will want, for example, to isolate the figures on alcohol consumption from the figures on alcohol that is bought from supermarkets or from off-licences. Those places are not affected by the Bill. To monitor the impact of change we will want to know how much alcohol is sold through licensed houses rather than through other outlets. Likewise, the industry may be asked to supply information on the distribution of sales. If my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood says that he is disposed to accept new clause 1—as I hope he will be—I hope that, so far as he is able, he will give the House an assurance that the industry will co-operate with the three Government Departments in making essential information available so that we can monitor the impact of this legislation on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems.

I think that other Government Departments might be involved in this exercise. I am not certain whether the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, or the Department of Trade and Industry, is the Department responsible for the brewing industry. This exercise will have an impact on the brewing industry's health, so perhaps the Department of Trade and Industry, or MAFF, should have been included in new clause 1, because they may have useful information available. The new clause says that the three Departments "shall monitor the effects", and I very much hope that the information will be published. It is essential to find out the answers. If we conduct this exercise, the results should be published.

The new clause goes right to the heart of the argument about the whole Bill. Is the reform of licensing hours simply a welcome response to public opinion which removes a tedious restriction and is neutral in terms of alcohol consumption and consequential harm? That, in a nutshell, is the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is perhaps unique in the House in so far as he has become a Westminster character outside the precincts of the House. If one rises early in the morning and drives down the Embankment, one often seen the hon. Gentleman on is bicycle. He wears big arm bands and a luminous reflector —I do not know what it is called—on his back, and all over his bicycle are streamers to ensure that some drunken clown does not drive down the road in the dark and bash into him, so that we lose him as a Member of Parliament and there is an unfortunate by-election. Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment, especially as the new clause relates to road safety? He has a special contribution to make to our proceedings. I should like to know what he feels when he is cycling around London, especially late at night, when he knows that he is at risk.

Sir George Young: I am very touched by the hon. Gentleman's concern for the health of a Conservative Member. The article to which he referred is called a Sam Browne belt. It is one of those luminous straps that one puts around one's self. I shall come to the matter of road safety, particularly from the cyclist's point of view.

New clause 1 goes to the heart of the debate between my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood, who believes that it simply removes a tedious restriction and has no effect on alcohol consumption, and the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, that liberalisation will give a further boost to alcohol consumption and the problems with which increased consumption may be associated. It is essential to resolve that argument, because it may influence the House on the need for further reform. New clause 1 is an attempt to provide the answer to that question in so far as it requires three Departments to monitor and, I hope, to publish the impact of the variation orders.

The new clause is directed at the Government, and I should like to put a number of questions to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister. There have been protracted exchanges about the impact in Scotland of the liberalisation that has already taken place there. I wonder whether the Government have given their view on the various bits of research that have been published, and whether they are satisfied that the impact of the change in Scotland has been adequately monitored. Has my hon. Friend worked out what the impact of the Bill will be on the three Departments involved in terms of manpower and costs? I am not sure what the rules are about private Members' Bills and the extent to which they are allowed

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to increase public expenditure, but if we were to adopt new clause 1 there could be consequences in terms of manpower and costs for those three Departments.

10.30 am

Let me pose some of the methodological problems that we shall have to overcome if we are to measure properly the impact of increased consumption on public order, road safety and health.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman asked the Minister what work had been done to examine the research done by others. The problem is that much of the research done in Scotland is not very objective. In fact, it is very subjective. It is based on the reports of organisations with a clear commercial interest. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is mumbling from a sedentary position. I wish that he would get to his feet and reply. I want to know the answer to the question put by the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). The Minister did not intervene to answer it, so I am trying to obtain an answer. There are strong commercial pressures on researchers that prevent them from being objective. We need an objective assessment. That is what the new Clause sets out to establish.

Sir George Young: I am aware that allegations have been made about the independence of some of the research that has been published. That is why I think it important that the Government should tell the House whether they have made their own analysis of the various research projects, whether they have conducted any research of their own, and what their view is of the impact of the licensing reform in Scotland. Has it increased consumption and damage? If the House is to make a decision, we are entitled to know the answers to those questions.

If we are to monitor honestly the impact of the change on public order road safety and health, we must isolate the impact of other changes that may be taking place. If we implement the Bill and consumption goes up, but at the same time there is a well-organised, well-directed promotional campaign on road safety in one part of the country, but nowhere else, that will clearly have an impact on the consequences of the change. Likewise, if there are tariff or tax changes at the same time, that will have an impact on both consumption and alcohol-related problems. If there is a heavy increase in police manpower, or if police priorities are changed to take more account of drunken driving or other public order effects, that again will have some impact when we try to analyse the change introduced by the Bill.

I am anxious that the change should be monitored, but I think that whoever does the monitoring will have to take account of some of the problems at which I have hinted if we are to come up with the right answer.

Amendment No. 6 deals with road safety. As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was good enough to mention, I travel around Westminster on two wheels, as I find that the most effective and quick way of getting around. It also does something for my waistline. However, the cyclist, who is a vulnerable creature at any time, is more exposed to danger at night, because he is more difficult to see when it is dark. The difficulties are added to if there are drunken drivers about. Such drivers tend, for instance, to turn left, having just overtaken the cyclist, without giving any indication, and sometimes a car door is inadvertently opened after the car has stopped while a cyclist is riding past. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point referred to some statistics. If they are published, I hope that they will pay some regard to the exposure of the cyclist, who is particularly vulnerable, to drunken driving.

I do not wish to detain the House further on the clause. However, I feel that the key to the debate is contained in new clause 1. Surely we are entitled to know whether the Government are prepared to play their part in answering the question that has come up time and again this morning and in Standing Committee: is this a harmless measure of social reform that will have no damaging consequences, or —as my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point said so eloquently—will it merely add a further twist to consumption problems and an illness that is already causing considerable damage to society and imposing large costs on the National Health Service?

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will tell us that the Government are sympathetic and prepared to carry-out research, and to publish it when it is available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) for the kind remarks that he made about me. We have had some long debates in Standing Committee, mainly between my right hon. Friend and me. As always, he has been courtesy itself. I also listened with great interest to the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young).

The Bill is a modest and controlled measure. I am a great believer in the Act of Union, and I think it absolutely right for a Scottish Member to put forward measures applying south of the border when we are proud of what we have achieved in Scotland.

The consequences of the kind of liberalisation of licensing hours that has taken place in Scotland come under various headings, either positive or neutral. I speak on the basis of the research that I have read on the Scottish experience, and also on my personal experience. I have told the House before of the times when, as a student at St. Andrew's university, I would go into a pub after an evening's work in the library for a half pint and see the infamous 10 o'clock swill. Members of the public downed large whiskies and half pints at great speed, which is obviously a very stupid way to drink. The evidence produced by Plant and Duffy and other researchers is also positive about the Scottish experience.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I was not on the Standing Committee, so I am new to these matters. But is it true that Messrs Plant and Duffy receive money from the Scotch Whisky Association for their research? If so, how much do they receive, and for doing what? What is done with the research?

Mr. Stewart: As the hon. Gentleman says, he is new to the debate. He did not take part in the first Second Reading debate or in the resumed Second Reading debate; nor, to my knowledge, did he apply to serve on the Standing Committee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee, the Select Committee on Procedure, the Select Committee on Members' interests and the Standing Committee on the Consumer Protection Bill.

Mr. Stewart: I accept that. But the Plant and Duffy article was published by the *British Medical Journal*. They are highly-respected academics.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They always are.

Mr. Stewart: No one has ever cast such an aspersion on those two distinguished academics. There are those who, on technical grounds, have said that they may or may not be right on this or that, but when researchers are invited to speak at conferences organised by Alcohol Concern or by bodies such as the Scottish Council on Alcoholism and when are they listened to with respect, that shows their standing.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How much do they get?

Mr. Stewart: I resent the way in which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is behaving this morning.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Was it £49,000?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point for the way in which he responded to the earlier intervention by the hon. Member for Workington regarding research that is funded by the industry. The industry is genuinely concerned about the problems of alcohol abuse.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Although I am as guilty as any hon. Member, I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) agrees that it is not normally the custom to respond to sedentary interventions. However, I think that my hon. Friend should emphasise, yet again, the slur that has been cast on the integrity of those two individuals by the aspersions of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). People are asked by a variety of industries to carry out research for them and they are provided with resources by those industries, but their academic integrity remains untarnished. For it to be suggested by the hon. Member for Workington that there is a connection between the results that are achieved and those who commission them is, frankly, disgraceful.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those who are opposed to the Bill agree entirely, I am sure, with what my hon. Friend has just said.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: The industry is concerned about the problems of alcohol abuse.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: No, I shall not give way again to the hon. Member for Workington.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member for Workington operates according to a personal code that is not, I believe, shared by other hon. Members, and it is certainly not shared by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was a very interesting observation. The hon. Gentleman referred to a personal code. You will understand that a precedent is set out in "Erskine May" concerning references to the personal conduct of hon. Members. I should welcome it if you would ask the hon. Gentleman to clarify precisely what he means by "personal conduct".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That sounds much more like a debating point than a point of order.

10.45 am

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My point of order is not about the substance of the debate but about the hon. Gentleman's reference, irrespective of the nature of the debate, to the personal code of Members of the House of Commons. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have a specific responsibility to ensure that hon. Members are not subjected to such criticisms. I do not mind them. On the contrary, I welcome them. If, however, an hon. Member is free to make them when you are present in the Chair, it is for you to ensure that he is clear. Let him be far more specific. What is it that the hon. Gentleman objects to? Is it that I tell the truth and that he cannot take it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is nothing out of order in what the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has said.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that ruling. The hon. Member for Workington has endeavoured to cast aspersions on two distinguished academics who have no parliamentary privilege and no right of reply.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Of course they have a right of reply.

Mr. Stewart: That kind of aspersion would never have been cast by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point or by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton, both of whom have already spoken in the debate.

Road safety is a matter of genuine concern. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office has made clear the Department's position on road safety. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton asked me whether I thought that the industry would co-operate with the requirements of the new clause and the amendment, if they reach the statute book. On the basis of my knowledge of the industry, which is not extensive because I have no personal involvement with it, it has always co-operated fully with the requirements of the law.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton have both said that new clause 1 and amendment No. 6 should not cause the sponsor and supporters of the Bill any problems just because there is a difference of view about the effects of the measure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton has said, that is the essence of the debate. Therefore, the debate should be informed by statistics that can be made readily available. Nevertheless, because of other factors, it is not always easy to interpret statistics one way or the other. The new clause and amendment No. 6 pose no problems whatsoever for the supporters of the Bill. We

[Mr. Stewart]

are in favour of information being made available. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point has made a good case, and, as sponsor of the Bill, I recommend acceptance of new clause 1 and amendment No. 6.

Mr. Waddington: I am rather nervous about intervening at this point, when there is so much sweetness and light, but you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was asked certain questions by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). He asked about the Government's view on the impact of the change in Scotland and inquired about whether that change had been adequately monitored. During the Committee proceedings there were many references to a report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. That report, which was published comparatively recently, is of great interest and it may be helpful if, very briefly, I mention the essential points that emerge from it.

Between the introduction of the changes in Scotland in 1976, and 1984, the consumption of alcohol by women increased by 36 per cent. There was an increase in the consumption of alcohol by women in all age groups. The overall increase represents an increase both in the number of women drinking and in the amount that is drunk by individual women. There was a very small increase in the consumption of alcohol by men, but it is not statistically significant. However, male drinkers in 1984 were four times more likely than female drinkers to have drunk on licensed premises during the afternoon. Men also made more use of extended evening hours and Sunday openings of public houses. That, together with the absence of any increase in consumption by men, suggests that the relaxation of the licensing hours in Scotland did not play a major part in the increase of consumption by women.

OPCS concluded that it was unlikely that the increase was a direct consequence of the changes made by the 1976 Act. It believed that it was more likely to reflect changes in attitudes towards women drinking, possibly in part by the new licensing law. I understand that the overall conclusion was that the changes made in Scotland had led to more leisurely and responsible drinking rather than to anything else.

I am not here to pass judgment on the OPCS report; I am simply asking specific questions. The important point to make is that there has been a detailed survey which I invite hon. Members to read if they have not done so because it is a most detailed document and should give guidance to us all.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: This is the first opportunity that I have had to ask the Minister a question that I have wanted to ask him for several weeks and to which Government Ministers should have replied three weeks ago, at the time of the appointment of members of the Committee. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think it right that three Conservative Members of Parliament who take money from the drinks industry should have been members of this Committee and been able to vote——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot see the relevance of that intervention to the clause.

Mr. Waddington: The behaviour of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is quite deplorable. I resent his assertions and insinuations. He uses the protection of parliamentary privilege to abuse that privilege and to insult hon. Members The hon. Gentleman ought to be thoroughly ashamed of himself, and I hope that all his constituents know of his intervention today and know the sort of man who has been representing that constituency during the last few years. I do not think that it is necessary for me to say anything more.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton asked about the resource implications of the Bill. Throughout our deliberations I have been at pains to emphasise that the Government's attitude has been one of neutrality, not least because we do not believe that the scheme in the Bill is the correct scheme if one is considering licensing reform. Undoubtedly the resource implications of a scheme that provided for individual applications for variation orders would be very considerable.

In view of a question asked by the hon. Member for Workington, I ought to mention the Duffy and Plant research. It is perhaps not entirely without significance that that research was published in the *British Medical Journal* on 4 January 1986. If those gentlemen were bought by the drink trade and their research could not be looked upon as independent, I doubt very much whether it would have been published by the *British Medical Journal*. The Duffy and Plant research records that several recent studies have suggested that alcohol consumption levels in Scotland are very similar to those elsewhere in Britain. Nevertheless, a higher proportion of Scottish alcohol consumption is in the form of spirits than is the case in England and Wales. In addition, alcohol consumption in Scotland appears to be slightly more concentrated. It appears on fewer separate occasions than in England and Wales. Wilson suggested that Scottish alcohol consumption levels may once have exceeded those in England and Wales, but that recently these differences may have faded. In other words, they may have faded since the time of liberalisation back in 1976.

After the sweetness and light poured on the House by my hon. Friend the Member of Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), it would not be right for me to say all that I would have said on the new clause. My hon. Friend is in charge of the Bill and he must make his own judgment. The only reservation that I would have expressed is that, if one writes into a Bill of this nature a provision for specific monitoring, as set out in new clause 1, it might be read as an instruction to all those concerned to carry out only that sort of monitoring. That is the last thing that I know my hon. Friend would wish. Quite clearly, it is the duty of all the Departments concerned to react to public concern and to carry out the research and monitoring that seems necessary as events develop. Therefore, although I realise why my hon. Friend has decided to accept the new clause, I hope that everyone will realise that it must not be taken as an instruction to the Government to carry out monitoring only in that area. I hope it is also recognised that the wording will create considerable difficulty for the Government, because one will have to keep statistics of the number of variation orders in particular parts of the country, and not just statistics of the total number of variation orders.

That brings me straight back to the point that I have made so often and that is of help to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) about the resource implications. One is adding to the Bill yet another provision that will add to the resource implications already

there as a result of the machinery for separate applications for variation orders. In all the circumstances, and in the light of my hon. Friend's views as to the acceptability of new clause 1, I shall say no more.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I would like to make a number of points about this new clause. It complements the Bill extremely well. The Bill is welcomed among the licensed victuallers in my association and I put on record my appreciation of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is in charge of the Bill, and the Government for the way they have conducted these proceedings. One of the greatest characteristics of this Government has been the way in which they have enhanced the notion of personal responsibility. This Bill is a significant further addition to that principle in its application to the use of alcohol in a responsible way. We are seeking to promote tourism and enterprises in my constituency of Stafford, so this Bill will be helpful. On the other hand, I have had reason to be concerned recently about a number of instances where pub owners have been viciously attacked by thugs who have gone into the pubs and caused very great distress.

I should like to mention the recent case of Mrs. Whitehouse of the Lamb Inn in Stafford, who was viciously attacked and caused great injury. As the Home Office is responsible for the matter, and in the context of the new clause, which I think is a good one, I hope that the Minister will take on board the fact—I have written to the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor—that it is wrong for such lenient sentences to be given, such as that given to the assailant of Mrs. Whitehouse after a vicious attack. In fact——

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Radioactive Waste (Disposal)

11 am

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes.

I have received a letter from the chairman of NIREX reporting on the results hitherto of the investigations at Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck and South Killingholme, and giving me his current assessment of the economics of shallow disposal of low-level waste; and of the alternative of deep disposal together with intermediate-level waste.

The letter from NIREX, which I have placed in the Library together with my reply, concludes that, although a safe near-surface disposal facility could certainly be developed at any of the four sites currently being investigated, the economic advantages of separate near-surface low-level waste disposal are nothing like as great as NIREX earlier thought. Consequently, NIREX concludes that it would be preferable to develop a multi-purpose deep site for low-level waste and intermediate-level waste rather than proceed with the investigations for a near-surface facility at any of the four sites currently under investigation.

I accept that conclusion. NIREX will therefore now concentrate on identifying a suitable location for a deep multi-purpose facility for both intermediate-level waste and low-level waste. It is already evaluating the relative merits of techniques of deep burial of intermediate-level waste in a repository on land, tunnelling under the sea from the shore, and disposal into the seabed from a sea-based rig and it will now extend this study to embrace low-level waste as well. It will not proceed with the investigation of a near-surface facility for low-level waste at Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck or South Killingholme.

I should like to pay tribute to the staff of NIREX and its consultants for the quality of the technical work they have done, and also for their very great efforts to establish good working relations with the local communities.

This is a sensible development of our policy to establish not only safe but acceptable facilities for the disposal of radioactive wastes.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The Labour party welcomes the decision by Her Majesty's Government to abandon this policy, which we have long argued from the Dispatch Box, is misconceived, undemocratically perceived and has been found to be deeply flawed technically, as we suggested it would be. We can fully understand the relief that will be felt in the communities in the vicinity of Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck and South Killingholme. I pay tribute to the hon. Members from both sides of the House who fought against that flawed policy.

However, we recognise, as does the rest of the country, that the Government have acted only in a squalid attempt to save themselves from electoral embarrassment. There can be no other explanation for this announcement being made today. If I lived in one of the four constituencies affected, I would need more reassurance than that given by the Government that they will not reverse the policy if by any accident they happen to win the next election.

The policy that the Secretary of State has abandoned today has been found to be bankrupt. I wonder whether he will give the country an assurance that the next round

[Dr. David Clark]

of decision-making will be done openly, with full input from local and environmental groups and with full consideration of all the international experience. That is vital. Will he now acknowledge that decision-making in secret by a small group of Government technicians simply does not work? As the Secretary of State has now acknowledged, they simply could not get their costings right.

In his statement, the Secretary of State told the House and the country that the Government, in their attempt to tackle this serious problem, will concentrate on a single, deep, multi-purpose facility for nuclear waste. We all know that that is the Swedish solution that has been advocated by the Labour party and the Select Committee of the House for a considerable time. Some of us have seen it in Formark in Sweden.

The Government's estimate of the amount of waste that will be accumulated and accelerated by the decision to go ahead with the Sizewell proposal will increase the problem, without finding solutions. In his evidence to the Select Committee, the Minister said that by the year 2000 we would require facilities for up to a dozen multi-storey tower blocks. That is the extent of the problem in Britain.

Does the Secretary of State realise that, although we admire the Swedish system, we would require up to 16 Formarks to cope with the problem? What work is going ahead on that issue? What procedure will be used to identify up to 16 seaside towns that will be examined and used for a deep mine facility? Have the Government considered the full implications for the health of workers in the nuclear industry and in the nuclear transport industry of this continued delay? Will the Secretary of State act urgently on that problem?

Does the Secretary of State recollect that in 1976 the Flowers report said that we were a long way behind our neighbours with a policy on the problem? Will he press ahead as quickly as possible and give the House some indication of when he intends to start work on the problem? How will he overcome the problem of blight that we have experienced on the four sites, when he is looking at a further 16 areas?

The Secretary of State has made the announcement, and we welcome it. We understand why it has been made, but we hope that the Government will follow the Labour party's approach when they go into the next round of decision-making and will decide to consult widely with environmental groups and the industry, because only by doing that and by taking the general public along with them will they be able to cope with this difficult problem.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is muddled about a number of things. He says that he welcomes the statement —I am grateful to him for saying that—but then he describes it as squalid. He cannot do both. If his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who is in charge of shadowing my Department, were present —I am not regretting or complaining about the fact that he is not — he would say that he has always recognised the need for shallow disposal sites and believed that they were safe, as I still do. That policy was also endorsed by the Select Committee, to which I pay tribute. Therefore, there is nothing from which the hon. Gentleman can make political capital.

I wish to emphasise that the reason for the exchange of letters, which are in the Library, was that the work done by NIREX has shown that the large cost differential between shallow and deep sites has now more or less disappeared. As the reason for going for a shallow site was originally the large cost differential, it must now be right to ask NIREX to investigate a deep site, since the cost of storage is no longer greater.

The hon. Gentleman accused me of behaving secretly. As I received the letter from NIREX only yesterday, I believe that the rapidity with which I have come to the House to make the statement shows that I have nothing to hide or conceal from the House and that I wanted to make those fact available as soon as I received them.

I appeal to the hon. Gentleman not to start talking about 20 seaside towns, this town or that area, or that county, or the other constituency. We do not have any proposals from NIREX for a deep disposal site. The hon. Gentleman should know better—he is a Front-Bench spokesman. It is all too easy for him to start playing politics—*[Interruption.]* As the hon. Gentleman said that the Labour party recognises the need to find disposal sites for nuclear waste and that the nuclear industry would have to provide those sites, it is up to the hon. Gentleman as well as the Conservative party to co-operate in taking the matter calmly, reasonably and rationally.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I am sure that the residents of the four areas concerned will welcome very much the statement by my right hon. Friend. For whatever reason the decision may have been taken, happily, the economics show that another solution is equal, or even preferable, to the one that was being sought by NIREX. Nevertheless, what is the time scale proposed for finding alternative facilities?

Everyone has recognised and is agreed that the method used at Drigg is an unacceptable form of disposal and, furthermore, the time there is running out shortly. How long will it take to explore and find alternative facilities? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recommendations made by my Select Committee, that compaction and pyrolysis should be used to reduce the volume of low-level waste, would resolve some of the anxieties that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) mentioned, because the need for sites would be vastly reduced?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the report from the Select Committee, which he chaired, and for what he has just said about it being right to change course in the light of the changed economic figures that are now before me. The answer to my hon. Friend's question about the time scale is that the position until now has been that NIREX believed that a shallow site might be available for use in the mid-1990s, but that a deep site might not be available until about the year 2005. I hope that by asking NIREX to concentrate on looking for a deep site, it will be able to advance that date by a year or two, or even three, so that the deep site will be available soon after the end of the century. I am quite confident that the storage of nuclear waste in the meantime can well be accommodated, as the exchange of letters will show, which I commend to my hon. Friend.

With regard to Drigg, I confirm that we shall consult on a new draft authorisation for the storage licence there, and that there will be compaction to increase the capacity of the site. In response to my hon. Friend's Select

Committee's recommendations, we shall also be tightening up the safety requirements on that site. I believe that NIREX and British Nuclear Fuels plc are satisfied about the capacity problem and that there will be no difficulty with that.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): This must be about the greatest and quickest U-turn in the history of the Government, seeing that the letter was despatched yesterday and the Secretary of State must have been up early this morning to send his reply. The obvious conclusion—the Secretary of State must not try to deny it—is that when the public's environmental concerns were put forward, the Government turned a deaf ear, but when the political and electoral concerns of the right hon. Gentleman's party managers were put forward, like a response to a Mayday signal the Government came to the rescue at the last moment.

I should like to ask two specific questions. First, does the Secretary of State accept that the Opposition parties have argued all along for what he has now concluded is the better option? He was wrong, the Conservatives were wrong, but the Opposition parties were correct. Secondly, does the right hon. Gentleman agree with the chairman of NIREX, who says in his letter that ready public acceptance of low-level disposal will not be achieved in the short term? The public are not happy with nuclear waste, and the Government's belief that they could be persuaded was wrong. The costings could have been worked out first without putting those four communities to all the trouble of the drillings and the test bores. If the Government had been minded to be fair about that, the four communities could have done without a year and more of enormous concern, which in the end has vindicated them and shown that the Government have been going in the wrong direction for the past three years.

Mr. Ridley: It was typically squalid of the hon. Gentleman to try to make those political points about a serious and important matter for the future of our economy and for our environment. The reason why that exchange of letters has taken place is that the fundamental difference in costs between shallow and deep disposal of low-level waste has, after exhaustive examination by NIREX, been shown not to be there. That must be something that the hon. Gentleman will accept, just as I accept it. I will not take it from the hon. Gentleman to be criticised for coming to the House and announcing that fact as soon as I had time to make the statement, having replied to NIREX.

The hon. Gentleman is incorrect in saying that the Opposition parties have all been arguing for this solution, because the hon. Member for Copeland has always believed that a shallow disposal facility is right, and he is in charge of the Labour party's environment portfolio. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about this. I have no reason to believe that a shallow disposal site is not totally safe, and no such decision would have been made if it had not been for the cost differential.

The hon. Gentleman talked about public acceptance. He has misread the letter from NIREX. He will find that there is a problem, in Mr. Baker's view, with public acceptance of the disposal of radioactive waste as a whole, not just low-level waste.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private Members' day. I ask hon. Members who are called to be brief in their questions.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): As my right hon. Friend knows, not only I and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck), but all Essex Members of Parliament and all elected local authorities in Essex, were opposed to the Bradwell project from the start. I hope that my right hon. Friend will appreciate the relief and delight at the wise decision that he has announed. He will know that Bradwell is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), who, as Chief Whip, has been precluded throughout from expressing his very strong oppostion to the project, because of the conventions of the House, but is my right hon. Friend aware that I have been in close touch with my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip throughout? We have worked together in close harmony, and I am empowered to say how delighted he is, as I am, at this wise decision.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support and for what he has said, but I think that it would be right if I made it absolutely clear that my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham) and I never discussed the matter until last night. He has been scrupulous in conducting his duties as Chief Whip, irrespective of his views on the issue that we are now discussing.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I am not by nature a vindictive person—at least I hope I am not; not any more than any other hon. Member—but if I were to try to pretend that I did not relish today's event, I am afraid that I should be guilty of being somewhat economical with the truth.

As an engineer, the justification of economics in regard to shallow disposal compared to deep disposal leaves me somewhat breathless with astonishment. The only thing that I can detect is the erosion of electoral support. If there is a difference in cost to justify the statement, will NIREX and the Department publish the costings so that everyone can test the validity of the claim? If the Department now backs deep disposal sites, will the right hon. Gentleman give a repeat performance of the two previous statements and say that the Billingham and Cleveland areas will not be identified for that purpose?

As the Secretary of State has allowed himself to be persuaded that the less-blinkered perspective of those who are not experts in the industry is acceptable, how will he justify trying to persuade the House to accept the proposals for Sizewell B a week on Monday?

Mr. Ridley: I remind the Gentleman that he is not the only engineer in the House, because I am also a qualified engineer. The costings have already been published and are to be found in the letter that is in the Library. I cannot comment on what proposals NIREX might put to me in the future, because that is a hypothetical question.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be warmly welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who has worked tirelessly on behalf of his constituents and who is, even now, with his constituents?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend speaks in accordance with what my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) would have said if he had been here.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): May I remind the Secretary of State of the comment that I made when his predecessor made the announcement about investigating the four sites? I said that because the four sites had been identified the black clouds that had hung over other parts of the country had moved to four specific areas. As a result of today's statement the black clouds have moved from those four areas—I am happy about that—but every hon. Member representing a constituency with a coastal boundary must face the possibility of an investigation in his constituency.

Not only is the depositing of low-level nuclear waste a problem, but so is the transporting of it. Will the Secretary of State confirm that any constituency with a coastal boundary is a potential site for the depositing of low-level waste? My constituency has a coastal boundary, although I might be considered fortunate because coal workings exist all along the coast. All hon. Members with a coastal boundary must be worried.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) first used the phrase "coastal boundary," but if the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) reads my statement he will see that NIREX is now

"evaluating the relative merits of techniques of deep burial of intermediate-level waste in a repository on land, tunnelling under the sea from the shore and disposal into the seabed from a sea-based rig".

Those are the three options. The first is on land, the second is tunnelling under the sea from the shore, and the third is disposal into the seabed from a rig.

I plead with all right hon. and hon. Gentlemen not to play the game of guessing where something might or might not be, when at the moment there are no proposals from NIREX. Indeed, it was only today that I asked it to make proposals.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I welcome the statement, which will also be welcomed by many people in Yorkshire and Humberside, not least by those who live in the Brigg and Cleethorpes constituency. Will my right hon. Friend give priority to finding a deep site as far north as possible?

Mr. Ridley: This is not the proper occasion to introduce arguments about the north-south divide.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The Secretary of State has made it clear that economic factors are the reason for the change. Does he accept that while investigations into the three options are taking place economic factors could change yet again? May we have an assurance that the most important considerations are not economic, but those of safety, and the public concept of that safety?

Mr. Ridley: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman accepts that the reason for the statement is the economic change described in the letter to which I referred. Of course economics are not the only concern, but at the outset when the four sites were considered the economic differential was about 20:1. It has now shrunk to nothing. Obviously economics are a factor, but there is no question but that whichever site or type of site is chosen—deep, shallow, in the sea or on the land — safety will be the Government's paramount consideration.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the NIREX facilities in my constituency alongside the important nuclear research institution at Harwell laboratory? Does he recognise the importance of an early resolution to the problem of nuclear waste disposal? Will he confirm that Britain cannot will the end of achieving nuclear power without willing the means of nuclear waste disposal?

Mr. Ridley: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend's last comment. We cannot have a nuclear industry unless we find a repository for its waste. We are to have a nuclear industry, so we shall succeed in finding a repository.

I regard today's statement as an evolution; an improvement in our knowledge and in our costings of the difficult question of waste disposal. It is a step forward. We now know that the ultimate answer is likely to be in one of the three options, and that increases our preparedness, so that we no longer waste time on false avenues.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Is the Secretary of State aware that I am committed to the principle of a nuclear industry? Does he accept that the people of Northumberland, Tyneside and Cumbria, where mining interests go back centuries, are aware that mines have been closed in those areas and that deeper mines exist under the sea? The people are not naive, and they are aware that nuclear waste is likely to be transported in their areas. Will the Minister inform NIREX as soon as possible that it must be open and frank and educate the people to the realities of the transport and safe storage of nuclear waste? If he does that, he will do the people in those areas a favour.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is doing the people of the country a favour, both in his stand that the nuclear industry is essential for our economic development and in his recognition that people must be persuaded that they cannot have the benefits of nuclear power without the difficulties associated with waste disposal. If the whole of his party was as realistic, it would not be experiencing its present difficulties.

It is extremely unlikely that any old coal mines will be acceptable. An immense amount of care is required in the selection of rock formations that have no water fissures and of particular types of rock suitable for such a facility. I can give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that a new shaft would be bored into a new strata of rock that had all the required properties. An old abandoned coal mine would not be used.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have been able to contact my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), who are heavily involved in ministerial and constituency duties? They have asked me to say how grateful they are, on behalf of their constituents, for this statesmanlike decision by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Ridley: I must not accept gratitude from my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) because, equally, I would have had to accept their curses if the decision had gone the other

way. The truth is that this matter has been decided entirely on economic merits and not at all on my hope for favours from my hon. Friends' tongues.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Now that it has proved so difficult to get rid of what the Secretary of State termed as safe waste, and after 18 months of negotiations the Government have had to say that they will not dump waste at the four sites, will the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is strong evidence that four opinion polls which were taken in those areas where the waste was to be dumped and which were due to be published shortly would have shown that the Tory candidates in those seats were in severe jeopardy? That is why the Secretary of State has come along in this hasty fashion today. Will he acknowledge that, having faced this black hole of the election, he had to try to cobble together some other proposals? Will he say categorically, notwithstanding what he said about existing coal mines, that no suggestion will be made about placing any of this waste in what are known as opencast areas, where giant holes have been created in places such as my constituency where lots of waste has been dumped, including dioxin and other toxic products, and that they will not be used for this kind of proposal?

Mr. Ridley: I gather that an opinion poll which was taken at the four sites as to people's attitudes to waste disposal was published yesterday. Against the decision that I have taken, they show a slightly more favourable attitude towards shallow disposal of low-level waste than perhaps the House would have expected.

Mr. Skinner: Not that poll.

Mr. Ridley: I know of no other polls. They are the polls that matter and they are the polls at which I look.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) mentioned toxic and other waste in his constituency. I believe that those sorts of waste are far more dangerous than any low-level intermediate waste could ever be, particularly since they have not been properly provided for in storages such as we were making.

Mr. Skinner: I want assurances.

Mr. Ridley: I am not giving any assurances whatsoever as to what sites, areas or techniques NIREX might suggest. We must wait and see what it proposes.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): As a strong supporter of nuclear power, I say to the Secretary of State, quite modestly, that when the original announcement was made I predicted that in the end the Secretary of State would not proceed, on the basis that there is a distinction between what is safe and what the public perceive to be safe. It is a remaining problem which we cannot resolve because of public prejudices. If west Cumberland is to be examined for further disposal, in the light of what the right hon. Gentleman has said he would do well to remember that while the people of west Cumbria accept nuclear power, because it provides much employment, they would object if, in the longer term, his announcement led to any escalation in the amount of nuclear waste that we are required to take. What I originally suggested to the Secretary of State three years ago stands. There must be an international settlement of these matters. We need an international bank for waste. That is the only way in which we will solve this matter in the long-term.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman claims prescience about this decision, and I think that it is the exception that proves the rule—for once the hon. Gentleman is right.

The hon. Gentleman has been right to support nuclear power which is an important industry in west Cumbria. I pay tribute to him for looking after the interests of his constituents, by the attitude that he has taken throughout. Nuclear power is vital to the area — I was there a fortnight ago — and I welcome anything that can be done to demonstrate to the rest of the country that the people of west Cumbria not only make their living from nuclear power in the main, but are very happy to accept the assurances that the safety standards are as high as I believe them to be. It is other people who spread scare stories about west Cumbria, not those who live there.

I have no idea what NIREX and BNFL will propose, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would be wise to talk to them about future plans for the Drigg site. It is referred to in the exchange of letters and I am satisfied that all precautions will be taken to ensure that that site is totally safe and under control. This is a help to those who would like to see disposal facilities advanced, and not long ago I was asked by the Copeland district council to accelerate the bringing forward of a deep hole for intermediate-level waste so that the waste could be removed from the site at Sellafield. This statement does exactly that.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have listened to a statement that is of great interest to the House, and most of all to the four hon. Members in whose constituencies NIREX's explorations have taken place. Not one of those hon. Members has been able to attend the House and we have had, at best, an attendance of about 30 hon. Members. On any other day than a Friday, the House would have been almost full. It is an extraordinary discourtesy to inflict on the House on a Friday morning a statement that lacks the urgency that normally attends statements that are made on a Friday morning.

In addition, it is a grave interruption of private Members' time, of which there is all too little in the House. The Secretary of State would have served the House far better if he had postponed his statement until Tuesday and I, like my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), can only conclude that political reasons made him decide to make this rushed statement this morning ahead of the publication of the opinion polls.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter of order but a matter for the Government whether there should be a statement. However, it is a private Members' day and there is little enough time for private Members.

Licensing (Amendment) Bill

11.38 am

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Cash: Before the statement I was speaking about the vicious attacks on pub owners that have occurred in my constituency and I told the Minister that I had raised this matter with the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor because I was appalled at the leniency of the sentence which was given—a suspended sentence—to a person who had inflicted horrific injuries on a constituent of mine, Mrs. Whitehouse of the Lamb Inn, Stafford. I also raised this matter with Mr. Bruce Williams of The Shropshire Inn, Stafford, who is the chairman of the local Licensed Victuallers Association. I hope that we shall receive a satisfactory response from the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor on those points.

Unfortunately, as well as that example, we now have pending a similar instance which occurred in the King's Arms, Eccleshall, where Mrs. King was attacked about 10 days ago.

I am glad, in principle, that the Bill is going through and I am particularly indebted to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) because it seems that the matter needs to be monitored, and on the carefully worked out basis of public order, road safety and health.

Not only do we need the results to be monitored, but we want to be sure that licensing justices will use their powers not to make an order if there is likely to be a public nuisance or a threat to public order or safety. We also need to be sure that magistrates' courts will revoke or amend orders if public nuisance is caused.

I welcome the principle of the Bill which will widen freedom of choice and personal responsibility and I am satisfied that there are suitable restraints to enable the new system to work effectively.

I should be glad if my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State would consider, if not today at least on another occasion, the use of exclusion orders. When publicans are subjected to vicious attacks exclusion orders can be served on their assailants. I was appalled that an exclusion order was not served on the person who attacked Mrs. Whitehouse. We should ensure that exclusion orders are not short-term measures, but run for a year or two to make sure that people behave themselves.

I am informed that in Madeley, in the northern part of my constituency, young people under 18 are being supplied with drink at a youth club or community centre by people over the age of 18. I am looking into the circumstances which could be the basis for refusing a variation order to the publicans who are allowing people over 18 to supply drink to younger people. It is a matter of the gravest concern if young people under the statutory age are being encouraged to drink.

I am extremely glad that the Bill is going through. It includes suitable safeguards to ensure that it will not be abused.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): New clause 1 is an important provision which I welcome, because it goes to the heart of many of the worries about the Bill.

I wish that we had monitored more diligently what happened in Scotland. The Minister referred to the OPCS survey, which is full of interesting information, but I am sure that he agrees that we do not have as much information as we should like about what happened in Scotland. If we had that information new clause 1 would be unnecessary.

It is regrettable that when such a momentous decision was made in Scotland insufficient effort was made to assess the implications of the change. Much of our discussion, in Committee and today, has been based on assumptions about the consequences of the Bill. We cannot say confidently what happened in Scotland and assume that much the same will happen in England. The new clause is a second best; at least the results of the change will be monitored diligently and carefully.

I listened carefully to the Minister, but the Government's attitude did not become clear. Unless we have a commitment from the Government to monitor carefully the results of the change in such a way that the House and the country will be helped to assess the consequences, new clause 1 will not mean much.

11.45 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I had not appreciated that there was some uncertainty in the Government about monitoring this extension of what has been loosely called the permissive society. Having listened to the chairman of the Tory party talking about the evils of the permissive society and the Prime Minister speaking about Victorian values and so on, I took it for granted that they would be here to say to the Minister, "Now look you here. We are not going to be slipping any further into this permissive age. We might get the whole show being degraded even further."

I should have thought that the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Tory party would insist on monitoring to find out whether the permissive society was being enhanced. I had not fully realised until now that that sort of slippage was taking place while the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Tory party were supposed to be in charge. What will they say on the hustings about this matter?

Mr. Dubs: My hon. Friend's intervention may provoke the Minister to make a more clear-cut response.

The Government have not given us an assurance that would enable us to be confident that the Government will do what clause 1 requires. I hope that the Minister will make a clearer statement of the Government's intentions.

The Minister expressed reservations about the resource implications of the procedures for issuing variation orders. That point was made in Committee, but new clause 1 raises a new issue which was not covered in Committee and I was not sure what view the Minister took on it. Exactly what is the Government's response to the new clause?

Mr. Waddington: With my eye on the clock, I was trying to do a service to the House by not spending too much time on the matter. As I have been asked to be a little more specific, I have no hesitation in being so.

We start from the proposition that no one doubts the health risks attendant on the consumption of alcohol, the dangers to others and the need to collect statistics to assess the risks and how we should respond to them. The new clause seems to assume that there is a dearth of statistical data on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems, but that is simply not the case. A range of information is collected, from which it is possible to

monitor trends on, for example, the incidence of road accidents in which alcohol is a contributory factor and the extent of alcohol-related health problems.

My Department maintains records of public order offences and offences in which alcohol is a primary cause. There is no suggestion that those statistical data will not continue to be available. To that extent, therefore, the new clause is unnecessary. As I emphasised in my short speech, there has been a great deal of research into what has happened in Scotland since 1976. I repeat that the OPCS survey is very rewarding and deserves careful reading. I also made available to the Standing Committee copies of a letter that I had addressed to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) in which I gave the statistics for total alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom as stated in the official journal of the European Communities. In litres per capita, consumption was 5·6 in 1960, 8·3 in 1970, 10·5 in 1975, 9·8 in 1979 and 8·5 in 1983. In other words, there was a big increase between 1960 and 1970 but virtually no increase between 1970 and 1983.

Mr. Skinner: Tactical drinking.

Mr. Waddington: I am not laying the foundations for any kind of argument. I am replying to the assertion that there is not a wealth of statistics. There is indeed a wealth of statistics. The problem is that one cannot always draw any certain conclusions from them, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) stated in Committee.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am following my right hon. and learned Friend's argument and I do not necessarily disagree with what he is saying, but in this context the statistics that matter are the health harm statistics. There is no doubt whatever that in the period under review harm has been increasing, especially among the young. I will give chapter and verse for that at a later stage. What matters is how much harm is being done and how many lives are being damaged or even destroyed by alcohol excess. That is what matters and it should not be avoided. We must have the statistics on that aspect.

Mr. Waddington: I have given many of those statistics, but they do not always support my right hon. Friend's argument. For instance, the death rate from cirrhosis of the liver has always been higher in Scotland and the figure has been rising from 1970 until the present, but it does not help my right hon. Friend's argument because there was no escalation in the rate of increase following liberalisation of the licensing laws in 1976. There is a wealth of statistics about health harm, but they do not prove my right hon. Friend's point, although they also do not prove the case advanced by the sponsors of the Bill. The statistics exist, but they must be analysed with great care to ensure that the right lessons are drawn from them.

In my earlier remarks I referred to the research carried out by Duffy and Plant. That is a further example of the work that has been carried out in this area. I emphasised that the OPCS survey of drinking in Scotland provided useful information about the level and patterns of consumption but that it was difficult to evaluate the implications of the evidence because there was no directly comparable data available for England and Wales.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With all respect to the Minister, he should remember that he is making an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The error is mine and I apologise to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). I understood that he had completed his remarks, so I called the Minister. With the leave of the House, however, I will call the hon. Member for Battersea again in due course.

Mr. Waddington: I certainly intended no discourtesy to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). I thought that he had finished his speech and had challenged me to deal with this point in a further speech, which is precisely what I am doing.

The OPCS survey compared levels of consumption and patterns of drinking before and after the 1976 Act and found that although there had been some increase in consmption it was almost entirely among women. As there was no discernible increase in consumption by men, the likely conclusion was that other factors had led to the increase among women, mainly the changing social attitudes towards women drinking. It is very difficult to conclude that it could have had anything to do with the 1976 Act.

Other statistics are quoted in my letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport, and I repeat that plenty of statistics are available. I promise my right hon. Friend that if a Bill similar to this one was passed by Parliament, we would try to monitor its effects and, bearing in mind the gravity of the issue of drink as a cause of accidents, disease and premature death, we would ensure that proper emphasis was placed on research in this area.

I was dealing swiftly—perhaps too swiftly—with the terms of the amendment because it did not seem to be fair to take up the time of the House on an amendment and a new clause which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said so quickly, and to my surprise, that he would accept. The Government would not have advised him to accept the new clause because new machinery would have to be established to gather details of all the variation orders granted within a county. Given our reservations on the Bill in terms of its resource implications for the courts, it cannot have come as a surprise to hon. Members when I said that the Government have grave reservations about new clause 1, which would add to all the difficult resource implications that follow from the scheme of the Bill and the idea of separate applications for variation orders.

But apart from that, the requirements of the new clause overlook the fact that, at present, statistical data do not always relate to county areas. For example, statistics on offences of alcohol-related crime are collected within police force areas, while statistics on alcohol-related health problems are collected on a regional basis. There is little point in collecting data on a county basis unless there are comparable data for earlier years. For all those reasons, the type of data that the new clause suggests should be collected may not be the most useful.

For the reasons which I advanced a few moments ago, it would be inappropriate to include a monitoring requirement in the Bill. It reads almost like a direction that that sort of monitoring should take place and that is the end of the matter. But we would all expect the Departments concerned to ensure that monitoring and

[Mr. Waddington]

research was carried out when it seemed appropriate in the light of the new facts and circumstances, including public concern.

I do not recommend the new clause to the House, but out of concern for my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood and with my eye on the clock, I have tried to deal with the matter briefly. I meant no discourtesy to the House, and certainly none to the hon. Member for Battersea, and I hope that my remarks have met his point.

Mr. Dubs: My enthusiasm to hear what the Minister had to say made me sit down as though I had finished my speech rather than as though I was giving way to an intervention. I regret that I caused the misunderstanding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank you for allowing me to say a few more words.

The Minister has not put my mind at rest. Although he was helpful in elaborating on the range of statistical information that is being collected and that would be used to meet at least some of the requirements of new clause 1, many other bits of information, not necessarily statistical, would be encompassed by the intentions of the new clause. Those the Minister has not given an undertaking to meet.

I understand the Minister's difficulty. He seems to be saying that we have much information, but it is not very conclusive. Although that information will be available, he is not certain that it will add up to the type of scrutiny of the consequences of the Bill—if it becomes law—that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) would have desired. That adds to the anxiety that I expressed earlier—that we missed a chance in Scotland. It would have been easier to set up the type of monitoring of the consequences of the changes that is necessary in Scotland than in England and Wales, for some of the reasons mentioned by the Minister. There are several others, but I shall not take up the time of the House by discussing them. Although the new clause is a worthy effort, in view of the Minister's remarks I believe that it will not go as far as I had hoped.

12 noon

When the Minister discussed the statistics relating to alcohol as a contributory factor to road accidents, he mentioned people who are above the present threshold. As we have a legal limit, it is understandable that statistics are collected on the basis of compliance or failure to comply with that limit. However, the Minister will surely accept that, even below that legal limit, alcohol poses dangers to drivers. It is clear that any amount of alcohol that is consumed by a driver lessens his ability to drive as safely as he would otherwise have driven. I am concerned that the level of alcohol that has been set, for particular reasons, as the legal limit—I certainly support the idea of such limits — is not beyond controversy. Other countries have lower limits because they think that they are more consistent with road safety. If we gather statistics only about people who are over a certain limit, we are missing much valuable information. The Department of Transport could collect and make available information that would deal with the problem of drivers who have been drinking amounts of alcohol below the limits set by the present legislation. All the evidence is that alcohol is a major contributor to road accidents. I suspect that the more one examines the matter, the more alarming become one's conclusions, because consumption affects a wider range of road accidents than is apparent at first sight of the current statsitics.

Nevertheless, the new clause at least points in the right direction, and I therefore support it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: *Hansard* will carefully follow our proceedings and accurately report what is said. However, some people cannot read. If they can only hear, they may like to hear the amendment that we are discussing to see how it slots into the clause in the Bill. Clause 1(7) states:

"Licensing justices shall make a variation order unless satisfied that it is undesirable to do so having regard to the social circumstances of or to activities taking place on the premises or in the locality in which the premises are situated; and such an order shall not be made if the licensing justices consider that the proposed variation of the permitted hours is likely to cause public nuisance or to be a threat to public order or safety."

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) has inserted an amendment that would include the words "road" between "or" and "safety" in line 20. That means that we are discussing the issue of road safety, and, in particular, variation orders. We are surely entitled to ask why we should take these matters into account.

I have received a letter from a Mr. Mark Kelly of 19 Tarbot crescent, Woodthorpe, Yorkshire. It is an interesting letter that is similar to many others that I and my hon. Friends have received. It reflects the concern of many others about the Bill and I shall read it to the House because letters that are written to Members have a special place in our proceedings. Invariably we wish to receive them because they represent the voice of the electorate. Mr. Kelly wrote:

"I was rather disturbed to hear that three MPs on the Committee looking into the licensing hours have a financial interest in the drink industry."

These are the words of an elector and as such he is important in our proceedings. The letter continues:

"Their defence that they declared an interest just does not satisfy me."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I hope that the views of an elector are not to be shut out of our proceedings, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must observe the procedures of the House. We are dealing with the monitoring of the effects of variation orders and road safety. The hon. Gentleman must restrict his remarks to those subjects.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Kelly is extremely concerned about these matters and feels that if they are to be considered fully, far more time should be given to the consideration of the Bill. That is why he is so angry about the selection of Members to consider the Bill in Committee. He writes:

"Surely it is not enough just to declare an interest. Members of Parliament with such interests"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman appears to be disregarding the clear ruling that I have given. He must restrict his remarks to the proposals that are before the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If I had tried to table an amendment to deal with this issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would you confirm that it would have been out of order?

There is no way within the procedures that exist within the House for me to raise this matter. When I raised it last week on a point of order—I have the relevant copy of the *Official Report* and this can be checked—I was told that it was impossible for me to raise the issue. If 50 million people, irrespective of what they think about the Bill and whatever their views on its likely effects on transport, the driving of vehicles and health, feel that the selection of Members to consider the Bill in Committee is a sufficiently important matter to warrant it being raised on the Floor of the House, they will expect an hon. Member who seeks to read a letter from a constituent to be adjudged as being in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair to other hon. Members who wish to speak. There is a heavy load of business on the Order Paper and he must, as he knows, restrict his remarks to the matters that we are discussing. If he does not do so, he will be being unfair to the House, including hon. Members who wish to address themselves to business that appears later on the Order Paper.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney South and Shoreditch): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I retain the right to speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I wish that to be established because I am on my feet. I wish first to raise a point of order, but I trust that you will call me again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I manage to catch your eye.

What are we to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when three hon. Members declare their interests, do not break the rules but cause many concern? The three hon. Members have not broken the rules and I do not accuse them of doing so. They have done what the rules of the House allow them to do. They declared their interests, and having done so it was known when they were voting what their interests were. In that way they have done everything properly. But what do we do when the rules of the House of Commons are set in such a way as to protect the rights of hon. Members to have outside interests? I do not complain about that. I am not one of those who say that they should not have them. If they want them, they should have them. But the rules are set in such a way that it is expected of hon. Members that, when they have pecuniary interests of such a nature, they would not wish to seek selection to such a Committee. The Bill is badly tarnished——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. He will recollect as clearly as I do that he raised it with Mr. Speaker the other day, and Mr. Speaker gave a clear ruling at the time. There is nothing that I can add to that ruling.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it be in order for my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) or any other hon. Member, when referring to a letter from an elector who is disturbed about the passage of a certain Bill and about some hon. Members sitting on a particular Committee and thereby, in his opinion, lining their pockets and assisting brewers who make large donations to the Tory party, to refer to that letter in the context of the amendment that deals with monitoring? It might assist the elector who wrote the letter in the hope that the matter would be raised as soon as possible. He might—but not necessarily—be satisfied to a degree if my hon. Friend could speak on the monitoring aspect in relation to his complaint about the Bill. If my hon. Friend were to deal with the matter in that fashion, he might conceivably be allowed to continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) suggested to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) how he might get his speech in order. Perhaps the hon. Member is grateful for that.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it or is it not a convention of the House that hon. Members do not interfere with other hon. Members' constituencies without their express support and permission, particulary when quoting letters from other hon. Members' constituents? I understand that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) quoted from a letter from someone in Yorkshire, which is clearly not the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I wonder whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will confirm that Mr. Speaker does not look kindly upon hon. Members trespassing on other hon. Members' constituencies, and particularly quoting their constituents' letters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I confirm that that is the normal custom in the House, and Mr. Speaker has reiterated it in the House on numerous occasions.

Mr. Sedgemore: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether I can help the House on the last point. I remember a famous debate when the then Secretary of State for Industry, who is now the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), quoted from three letters, none of which was from his constituents, which raised historic laughter in the Chamber. Leaving that matter aside, I support the Bill and hope that it gets its Third Reading today.

I wonder whether I can help my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He read a letter from somebody who purports to call himself Mr. Kelly in which he made serious allegations about the conduct of certain Government Members. Is it not a convention of the House that, when letters are read—the hon. Member started to read the whole letter—they should be placed on the Table? That might satisfy everyone and then we could get on with the business and the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) made a series of helpful suggestions. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is an experienced parliamentarian. I am sure that he will get his speech in order without any help from hon. Members.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not have to respond to the slurs made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He has admitted that three hon. Members — my hon. Friends the Members for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and I—have acted perfectly properly in accordance with the rules of the House. All hon. Members know what the hon. Gentleman is about with his campaign of smears and character assassination, but perhaps it is more difficult for those outside to

[Mr. James Couchman]

understand that, because he has only bankrupt policies to offer, he will continue to indulge himself in his dirty, dirty little campaign.

12.15 pm

I owe it to my hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North and for Romsey and Waterside, who cannot be here today, to say a little bit about what the hon. Member for Workington has said. My integrity has been impugned twice within the past 10 days by the hon. Gentleman. Last week, the hon. Gentleman made a scurrilous and defamatory attack and accused me of taking money in "back pockets for services rendered"—*[Official Report, 22 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 679.]*

Today he has effectively exacerbated what he said last week.

These attacks, if made outside the House, would render him liable to some charges which would probably end up with extremely hefty expenses payable for libel or slander. But they are made with the absolute privilege that we in this House enjoy. The damage done is none the less real and calculable.

Let me once again make my position in this regard absolutely clear. I am managing director of a small family company, Chiswick Caterers Ltd, in which I have a controlling interest. That company operates five tenanted public houses in London. I am paid a salary on which tax and national insurance are paid under the PAYE rules. It is the same position which I held before I became a Member in 1983, except that it carries half the salary that it did then. My parliamentary duties here have always taken precedence over my business interests. I am able to perform both tasks only by working very hard and for very long hours. I do that seven days a week. I doubt that my business interests take me more time that it does the hon. Member for Workington to dredge up his muck and slurs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hate to interrupt the hon. Member, but I must remind him that he is on a point of order and that he should be brief.

Mr. Couchman: Mr. Speaker and the Chairman of the Committee ruled last week that the way in which the three of us declared our interests had been totally in order. I shall not go over that, in the interests of brevity. I look to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your role as protector of the Back Benchers to protect me against the corrosive innuendo of the hon. Member for Workington who, with his hon. Friends, has brought so much disrepute to the House lately.

Sir Bernard Braine: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has worked long and hard to get his Bill through Committee and into the House. I am not complaining on this score, but, owing to the pressure of time, for the whole of yesterday and last night—I did not get to bed—I was preparing serious amendments to lay before the House, so that we could discuss the important matter of alcohol consumption and the Bill's effects on our national life. I cannot help but feel that these matters on a private Members' day are distracting us from our proper business. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who has been detained this morning in his constituency but who hopes to be with us shortly, and I have worked long and hard in preparing amendments, some of which may be accepted by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood, some of which may not. I hope that we can now make some progress.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for that very valuable suggestion. I appeal to the House. We have spent a long time on points of order that are of very little relevance to the Bill. There are many amendments to this important Bill to be discussed. It would be unfair to the Bill's sponsor, to those hon. Members who have tabled amendments, and to other Bills on the Order Paper to continue in this way. I appeal to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) not to pursue further points of order with which I have dealt, but to continue with his speech. I am certain that he will get his speech in order. Equally, I hope that he will take the advice of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and will be brief.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I intend to return to the thrust of the amendment, but first I should like you to confirm that I am entitled, as a Member of the House, to raise here the question of private influence and private interests affecting the passage of a private Member's Bill. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a sittings motion was moved in a Committee of this House to speed up the passage of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question at once, very briefly. Of course he is entitled to raise such matters at the appropriate time, and when it is in order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is what I said true?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have confirmed that the hon. Gentleman is perfectly entitled to raise matters of that kind at the appropriate moment, as long as it is in order forhim to do so. I have given him an answer. I now ask him to resume his speech.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall return to the thrust of the debate, although I have to say that everything that I have alleged is correct. That is known and on the record.

New clause 1 and amendment No. 6 deal with road safety, which should be an important consideration for those making variation orders. Road safety is a very important matter, and it weighs heavily on the minds of every hon. Member. A Committee of the House has been set up to deal with it. It is, I believe, an all-party arrangement, and it makes an important contribution. We have Government statements, recommendations by Ministers and Members of Parliament speaking in various parts of the country to all kinds of gatherings about road safety. Yet, because of the way in which the Bill was expedited and driven through its Committee stage by commercial interests, it has not been possible to examine such matters in detail, as I believe that they should be examined.

In the presentation of the Bill, and during its consideration in Committee, who has really taken on board the fact that one in five of all road accident deaths —some 1,200 a year—is caused by excess consumption of alcohol? Many people die because of drink. In about 10 per cent. of accidents, it is a major cause. At night, two

thirds of accidents in the United Kingdom—nearly 70 per cent.—involve a drinking driver. Most of those involved in such accidents, although not necessarily those who are knocked down, are under the age of 30.

The total resource cost of accidents and deaths in England and Wales—"resource costs" in this context means the cost to the Exchequer, and therefore to the taxpayer and the ratepayer—is some £85 million according to some figures that I have been given; according to others, it is £86 million and £87·5 million respectively. In Scotland—interestingly, as the legislation is already in place there—the figure is some £10 million.

However, the initial effect of the Road Safety Act 1967, produced under a Labour Government—although I believe that there may have been a good deal of private Member involvement in its passage—was considerable. Road casualties fell by 11 per cent. in the first year after the implementation of the 1967 Act, and deaths fell by 15 per cent. In the first seven years the drink and driving legislation saved about 5,000 lives and prevented 200,000 injuries. Those were substantial savings. Parliament has tried to restrict the effects of alcohol on road accidents and over the years has agreed that there should be further restrictions in order to save lives. That consensus has been broken by the introduction of a Bill that would lead to more deaths on our roads.

The effects of the 1967 Act quickly wore off. Before 1967, 27 per cent. of vehicle drivers in England and Wales who were killed in road accidents had blood-alcohol levels that were over the prescribed limit. In the year after the implementation of the Act, it was 17 per cent. In 1977 it was 32 per cent., so the signs are that the decrease in the number of road accidents has slackened off. In an intervention, the Minister of State commented on that precise fact. When I say "slackened off", I mean that it has slackened off in the last couple of years.

A previous Government accepted in principle the recommendations of the Blennerhassett committee that was referred to by the right hon. Member for Castle Point, who so ably moved new clause 1. It was exhilarating to hear his contribution. Clearly, he knows a great deal about the matter—much more than I—and has studied it in great depth. In his retiring years, the right hon. Gentleman has spent all night studying these matters, examining them and preparing for today's debate, on the basis that he believes that they are important. I can only express gratitude to him, and also the gratitude of many millions of people.

The previous Government accepted in principle the recommendations of the Blennerhassett committee about changing the drinking and driving laws.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am not sure that I heard the hon. Gentleman aright. Did he say that he understood that I am retiring from Parliament? I hope, with the help of my constituents, to be here for many years to come.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not wish in any way to suggest that the right hon. Gentleman is retiring from Parliament. I was referring to the fact the he is in his retiring years. I am coming rapidly towards my retiring years, but I hope that I shall be here to cause a little difficulty here and there for many a year to come.

The previous Government accepted in principle the recommendations of the Blennerhassett committee for changing the drinking and driving laws in Great Britain, but it was not thought that it would be proper or possible to find parliamentary time for legislation. The committee sought ways to reduce the number of alcohol-related accidents. Its report contains a thorough and convincing analysis and was commented on in detail by the right hon. Member for Castle Point. It has been accepted as the best way forward.

None of the alternative proposals, involving the adoption of quite different procedures in other countries, offers the same chance of improvement, and the pattern that was outlined by the committee is increasingly being adopted by other countries. The French Government have recently changed their legislation along similar lines. Those recommendations have one advantage—they are ready and capable of implementation. I hope that Government Ministers respond by acknowledging that that is exactly the case.

12.30 pm

The report contains one controversial proposal—the removal of the present limitation on alcohol testing at the roadside. Instead of the police being able to test only if they have reasonable cause to suspect that the driver has alcohol in his body or has committed a moving traffic offence, they would be able to test at their direction. The other proposals do not create the same degree of difficulty. The immediate issue for the Government is whether to introduce legislation that will implement this recommendation and the committee's other proposals. Those are very important matters because the general public is most concerned about what is happening in the area of road traffic accidents arising from alcohol.

Government Ministers repeatedly come to the Dispatch Box and advocate safer driving. The Government spend a fortune annually on advertisements, both in the newspapers and on television, on safer driving campaigns during the festive seasons, particularly at Christmas. We have all watched television after Christmas and seen the figures of accidents, and invariably alcohol-related accidents, that took place over the Christmas period. Therefore, people are unable to understand why the Government have taken the position that they are in favour of passing a Bill that will further liberalise the licensing laws in this country and potentially provide for more drinking.

The Government must know that that has implications for road safety, yet they refuse to acknowledge those implications by setting up an inquiry, publishing its findings and setting out what might happen if people at certain times of the day are able to drink more alcohol. There is a gross and indecent inconsistency in the Government's position.

My view, and the view of many, is that the Government should have opposed this Bill on the basis that it was insufficiently precise as to the hours that drink should be available and that it failed to take fully into account that a greater number of people could die from accidents arising from the increased use of alcohol.

The present law on the testing of drivers for alcohol has two main purposes. It establishes a degree of alcohol absorption above which drivers are likely to be impaired. Many drivers will be impaired by a great deal less. How often have hon. Members been with people who have said that they can drive because they do not feel drunk, yet they are way over the limit? Those things vary so much from person to person. The way the Government have dealt

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

with the Bill suggests that they, like the sponsors, have ignored that. That may have been dealt with during Committee but, as I understand it, there could not have been time during Committee because of the commercial pressures that arose.

Mr. Alan Stewart: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has made constant allegations about commercial pressures influencing the Committee and the sittings motion. He has made no allegations against me. Is he aware that the sittings motion that was put to the Committee would have been passed if those voting had been only my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), myself and the Labour Members?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that we will now get back to the new clause.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the hon. Gentleman rose you allowed him to make a statement. You are now preventing me from replying to that. He has said that Members of the Committee would have voted. That is an important statement for any Member of Parliament to make. No one can ever predict what would happen in any Committee of the House if the membership had been different. Different Members would or could have deployed different arguments. In the deploying of those arguments they may have convinced Members voting in favour of the sittings motion that they had obligations of another nature and that they should vote against it. I wish that the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) would consider what I am saying. He repeatedly falls into the same trap.

The Blennerhassett committee saw proposals on discretionary testing as central to its whole strategy. It might now be that if the new clause is not passed there could be an even greater need for the Blennerhassett committee proposals for discretionary testing to go through. I am concerned about this. One has to argue these things. There are all sorts of implications when one has discretionary testing. However, we are being driven by the motor of the Bill into having to accept what some might perceive to be an illiberal principle because, if it looks as if the increased opening hours of public houses leads to more people being on the road who have consumed alcohol, clearly the police will have to respond. They will have to set up new monitoring and testing arrangements to ensure that at least the annual figures show that they are responding to the new legislative and commercial framework that has been set up under the proposals in the Bill.

One would expect the police to accept that we would want to see, because it would be inevitable, a greater number of prosecutions arising from the tests taking place after the introduction of the Bill. In so far as I and many others believe that there will be more drinking and driving if we did no have a greater number of prosecutions it would suggest that there was a deficiency in the way in which the police were operating. I would not like to think that that was happening.

We know that the police are being tested every day on the question of resources and that they find it difficult to operate in the current climate of increasing crime. However, we are introducing a Bill that increases the work load of police forces without increasing the resources available to them to enable them to deal with the additional crime that will arise only as a result of the passage of this legislation.

The Blennerhassett committee regarded the proposal of discretionary testing as essential to its strategy. In that committee's view it involves returning to the proposals in the original 1965 White Paper. At issue is whether the law can be an effective deterrent without discretionary testing the perception of risk is greatly reduced. That final sentence is a very important proposition. Yet we have this difficulty over discretionary testing. The promoter of the Bill has not fully taken into account the Bill's implications for discretionary testing. Perhaps he will care to put me right.

Mr. Alan Stewart: I confirm to the hon. Gentleman that I am accepting new clause 1 and amendment No. 6. I underline the points already made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who is anxious to make other points on further amendments. That is my position on new clause 1.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is a very interesting intervention. We are now talking about the variation orders and who takes the decision on them. The clause states that

> "Licensing justices shall make a variation order unless satisfied that it is undesirable to do so".

So the licensing justices have a discretion, which means that they have to make a consideration. They have to take matters into account.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman may genuinely misunderstand this point. We are discussing new clause 1 and amendment No. 6, which is a narrower amendment. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point has moved new clause 1, which has been debated. I, as promoter of the Bill, have said that I accept it. I also underlined my agreement with the point already made by my right hon. Friend about the importance of the work that he has done and that others have done who are interested in further discussions on the other amendments on the Order Paper, including, those in the name of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman understands the point that I am making to him. Amendment No. 6 inserts the word "road" before "safety". We are amending a clause that deals with the discretion to licensing justices when they make variation orders. They have to take matters into account. While they may well have to do so, by reason of all sorts of commercial pressures in all communities — there are pressures on justices because it is Uncle Sam, Brother Jack, or whoever; we all live in the real world—they may find it difficult to evaluate objectively. Even when the amendment is accepted as part of the legislation the question will arise, what should be a road safety criterion that should be taken into account when the licensing justice makes a variation order under the discretion that is available to him?

When I asked the hon. Gentleman to respond to me, I only said that, in the real world, the thrust of the Bill, the existence of the Bill and the general proposition behind it means that more road accidents will arise from the abuse of alcohol, which in itself arises from the extension in

hours set out in the Bill. That is a fact. Even people outside the House who seek the change may well accept that. They might make a calculation and say, "There will be more road accidents and fatalities but if we build more aeroplanes they might crash and one does not argue against the building of more aeroplanes". It might be argued that that is a justification but if one believes that more road accidents will be caused by alcohol abuse as a result of liberalising the drinking hours it is wrong to support the Bill. I think that that proposition is supported by many people.

12.45 pm

Repeatedly we are told that this is a popular measure. I have received four letters, three of which opposed the Bill. As I do my rounds in my constituency I do not hear people telling me that it is popular. People might think that there should be more flexibility, and I do not argue against that, but they are worried because the pubs will be open longer.

People are also worried about the Bill's implications for employment. A person's health is affected when he has to work late at night. A landlord might say to a barman, "You're lucky. You've got a job. I want you here until very late tonight because business is going to be good." He might say that he intends to change his licence and open later hours or, "I want you to come in earlier. I know that over the years your lifestyle has been based on having the afternoon off but that is over. You've got to be here."

Some might call that constructive dismissal. In a former incarnation you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were a master of employment law and you know all about constructive dismissal. The measure could lead to cases of constructive dismissal being heard by tribunals.

The hon. Member for Eastwood represents a marginal constituency. I am sure that he will not wish to be seen to advocate anything which will prejudice his constituents who work in public houses. I withdraw that comment because the hon. Gentleman represents a Scottish seat and the measures in this Bill already apply in his constituency. The hon. Gentleman has already been through the hoop but some of us in England are not eager to go through that hoop.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall give way, because my argument is not at its strongest.

Mr. Stewart: The Bill is supported by the National Association of Licensed House Managers which is affiliated to the TUC and, as the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) said in Committee, it is supported by the Transport and General Workers Union.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am glad to hear that.

Sir Bernard Braine: But the Bill is opposed by the British Medical Association and the royal colleges.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is interesting, because the Minister told us that research funded in Scotland by the Scotch Whisky Association was published in the *British Medical Journal*. Was it published simply to show a willingness to be balanced in the presentation of the case? The BMA perhaps opposed the Bill but published material that would be helpful to the promoters. Is that correct? I was not on the Standing Committee and I am learning as the Bill progresses. Discretionary testing might be a major feature on the agenda, if the Bill were to succeed, because the public will demand an increase in prosecutions of those who drive vehicles in a state of inebriation.

The issue is whether the law can be an effective deterrent. Without discretionary testing the perception of risk is greatly reduced. At present, if a driver can get home by driving carefully and without giving the impression of impairment, his chances of being tested are slim and known to be slim. As a result, large numbers drive with levels of alcohol in the blood which expose them to substantial risks of accident. That is an interesting statement.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point expressed concern about the safety of schoolchildren going home between 3 and 4 pm. Last week in my constituency there was an incident involving a lollipop lady who became angry with a car driver, who she alleges was about to drive over a crossing that children were about to use. She felt that she was being intimidated, so she took hold of her lollipop and smashed his windscreen. She felt that she had to do that because it was her only defence against a driver whom she believed was acting irresponsibly.

I do not know the exact circumstances of that case, but that is her side of the story. I am sure that on many occasions in the past lollipop ladies have had to take action against people who, in their view, have been driving irresponsibly and thus endangering the lives of children.

What will happen if people driving home in mid-afternoon are full of drink and puddled out of their minds and wish to take on the lollipop lady and, indeed, may inflict death or damage on young children? Who will take responsibility for that? Will the hon. Member for Eastwood say, "I never thought that that would happen. I know that they said in Parliament that that might happen, but it was only Campbell-Savours; you know what he is like. It was just an allegation that he made"?

The hon. Gentleman would do well to remember what the Secretary of State for the Environment said today, because I predicted something three years ago and from the Dispatch Box today he said that I was right. It may well be that I am right on this occasion and that young children will lose their lives as a result of introduction of the Bill. The hon. Member for Eastwood may shake his head, but if that happens will he come to the House and make a personal statement? Does he intend to come and excuse the supporters of the Bill—people such as the big brewers and pub owners—for what has happened? I do not think that he will. It will just be another statistic, another tragedy. It will just be another family who have lost a child; it will hardly make a little bit of copy in the newspapers. I do not think that that is right. Perhaps we shall seek to delete all the clauses one after another so that we are only left with the title and then no damage will be done. I am sure that the great majority of people in this country will be very happy indeed about that.

It is unfortunate that the members of the public who support the Bill have not thought about the road safety implications. Perhaps they never dreamed that the right hon. Member for Castle Point would have to move an amendment to insert the word "road". They would have expected the promoter of the Bill to insert that word. The fact that he did not do so demonstrates the callous indifference of the sponsor, who was willing to put before Parliament a Bill that did not include that precious word. He was willing to ignore a matter of great concern to the public.

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

I am keeping strictly to the amendment because if I did not do so, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would rule me out of order. There may be other occasions when the Bill can be debated, so I feel free to deal, perhaps briefly, with a number of issues. If the Bill is not passed today, it will come back to the House next Friday. We have a lot of time to deal with these matters and I hope that the public understand that that is why we are dealing with a number of issues at length. We are determined to ensure that every slot of parliamentary time is used to discuss the Bill as fully as possible, with a single objective.

The present law appears to give the police a wide discretion, but the courts have not interpreted it in that way. The Blennerhassett committee examined alternative formulations that might allow the police greater freedom to use their resources effectively, without raising the spectre of discretionary breath tests. It concluded that there were no alternatives that were not liable to the same restrictive interpretation. The committee said that without discretionary testing there was little chance of raising the perception of risk.

The perception of risk is important. Only when people feel that they will be at risk of prosecution, disqualification, loss of employment, criticism from friends and children, arguments in families, references in local newspapers and in council chambers and even in Parliament will the perception of risk exist.

Under present arrangements the perception of risk has been set at a certain level. The Bill will change that situation, because it will introduce a new consideration for the police. More people who have been drinking will be driving. They could kill people. What will the police do about that? Either they must be given many more resources or they must have the right to carry out discretionary testing. That could spark off all sorts of arguments and the liberal lobbies would be worried. Indeed, we would all be worried. Even when I have had just one pint of beer in a pub before driving my car I feel a prick of conscience. Just one glass of beer and I feel guilty, even though I know that I am well under the limit.

The worry about discretionary breath testing centres on the belief that civil liberties will be threatened if the police do not have to fulfil certain specified conditions before stopping and testing motorists. The Blennerhassett committee said that it did not believe there were good grounds for that fear. A driver is responsible at all times for ensuring that his vehicle is in good condition and that he is fit to drive. It is on that kind of understanding that he is issued with a licence—a privilege which does not carry with it an automatic right to drive, whatever may subsequently happen. Under existing law, a driver may be stopped by police at any time without specific grounds to have his vehicle tested or his licence or insurance checked. Nothing improper is held to have been done when that happens. The same should apply in this case. Some say that there should be a means of checking before impairment manifests itself. This would show drivers, as the Blennerhassett committee recognised, that accidents or wild driving are not an adequate indication of impairment.

1 pm

This raises another issue which goes to the heart of the amendment. I should have thought that the sponsors of the Bill, and others who wish to see changes in licensing hours, would have wished to ensure that safe equipment was available—there is some already available—which any driver could fit to a motor car to act as an alcohol testing device. The driver could then test himself when he got into his car. If those who are so interested in promoting the increased consumption of alcohol had thought about this, they might have included a new section 75D placing a responsibility on all drivers and manufacturers to provide such equipment. A person who thought that he had had a few too many could then test himself and if the result was positive the ignition would cut out so that he could not drive the vehicle for an hour or two, or whatever the necessary period. Many hon. Members have more knowledge than I of the health aspects.

If we can send rockets to the moon, if we can build Tornado aircraft, microchips and all the new technology that Members have grown to love with the increase in secretarial allowances in recent years, surely it is not beyond the intelligence of man to produce a simple little piece of equipment to fit into a motor car so that if the driver taking the test is drunk and the red light goes on, the ignition will cut out. That might be some protection against the excuses which might arise from the implementation of the Bill. By refusing to identify "road" as the crucial word in the clause that the right hon. Member with his great knowledge of these matters had to introduce, the sponsor has made it clear to the world that he is simply not interested.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with great interest, but is there not a simpler approach? The Royal College of Psychiatrists has said that we should think in terms of drinking less and the World Health Organisation has called upon all member states, including the United Kingdom, to reduce their consumption of alcohol by at least 25 per cent. in the 1990s. Against that background, where is the rhyme or reason in asking Parliament to provide longer drinking hours in public houses? It is nonsense——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The new clause deals with monitoring. The right hon. Gentleman's comments are more appropriate to Second Reading.

Sir Bernard Braine: I do not wish to prolong my intervention, but it is indeed about monitoring. In order to monitor, we must know the facts. I was merely saying that there is a simpler solution to the problem than the very interesting technical suggestion made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). To return to the sobriety that was one of the glories of our country between the wars, we have to drink a little less. If that is difficult for individuals the answer is for the Government to discourage the idea that there should be an increase in drinking hours.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman has admitted that he likes a tipple on occasion. I, too like to have a bottle of wine occasionally, and it is easy for us to suggest that others might drink less. I would like people to drink less. I wish to deal in some detail with that, because I feel strongly about the consumption of alcohol and its effects on health and—the right hon. Gentleman has a great interest in this—on family life. That has been ignored in the Bill. I hope that, during the next few weeks, we shall have an opportunity to discuss the matter in great detail——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: But not on this new clause.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is precisely what I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We shall discuss it during the next few weeks, not today, although new clause 1 also relates to health. It covers alcohol-related problems with regard to public order, health and road safety. So far I have dealt only with road safety.

The Blennerhassett committee considered the enforcement of the present arrangements and discretionary testing, which goes to the heart of the matter. The new clause implies that the licensing authority will have to take into account the prospect — or lack of it — of discretionary testing. I can imagine magistrates meeting behind closed doors and agonising about what they should do when applications are made. Representatives of parents and governing bodies on schools will be saying to them, "You will not introduce new hours which will endanger our children." They will have to listen to the road safety lobby, the cyclists and representatives of county council education departments. Many people will lobby the magistrates saying, "Be careful, because if you change the rules, there will be more accidents on the roads." All sorts of lobbies will be trying to influence the licensing authorities, which will be placed in a very difficult position.

In the United States, such authorities are elected. Perhaps the supporters of the Bill have it in mind that, if licensing authorities prove to be obstructive and dare to resist granting such variations, they will introduce a Bill next year—no doubt sponsored by the brewing industry —to promote the principle of election to the bench. Then candidates will be able to run on platforms such as, "Vote for Joe Bloggs if you want longer hours", or, "Vote for Joe Bloggs if you want to retain the present hours." Let there be no doubt that the issue of licensing hours will be turned into a well-inflated—indeed, almost bursting—political football.

As everyone jumps in on the back of it, local Liberal candidates will be pointing both ways on the issue. They will say that they want extra hours in one part of the town and, in another that they do not really want them and have been misquoted: they want reduced hours. People in the commercial end of the Tory lobby in local communities will say that they want opening hours to be extended because they want their members to have increased business. Then, the little old ladies—the heart and soul of the Tory party — who, on some issues might be described as illiberal, but not on this one—might say that the issue goes against Conservative principles. The Conservatives are supposed to stand for decency, and they do not want to put up with people peeling out of pubs all day long. They want controls and restrictions. There will be arguments in Conservative associations between those who want more or fewer controls.

Candidates in other political parties will stand for greater hours and for fewer hours. Even Labour candidates might be divided on the issue. There is a division of opinion on the Opposition Benches, just as there is on the Government Benches on these matters. Inevitably, the issue will become a political football as people take into account the important words, "road safety". That is what will concern them and they will say that those words should feature prominently in the minds of the licensing justices when they make their decisions.

I do not believe that the Bill's promoters and their commercial backers have taken this matter into account. I can understand that the hon. Member for Eastwood, who, I believe, is a Scot——

Mr. Allan Stewart *indicated assent.*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: —might wish to punish the English in the same way as the Scots are being punished. However, some of us, by one means or another, intend to ensure that the Bill's implications for England are fully considered.

The Blennerhassett committee made five proposals on the issue of discretionary testing, and the public reaction to those proposals was mostly favourable. The final proposal was for continuing publicity. The committee accepted the need for Government, local authorities, organisations and lobbies to keep pestering the public with information about the dangers of drinking and driving. The committee also recommended the continuation of the existing structure of penalties, but with special procedures for high-risk offenders. I do not quite understand that, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) can help me. Special procedures sound like illiberal words. They do not smack of the civil liberties to which he and I subscribe. Our position on the life issue, for example, is shared. The words have connotations that I might find a little worrying, but no doubt we shall discover more about that in the course of the debate. As I have said, the Blennerhassett committee recommended the continuation of the existing structure of penalties. If the Bill were enacted and there were more people paddled and drunk on the roads and the police found that there were more opportunities for bringing people before the courts on drink-driving offences and more successful prosecutions, surely the penalty would have to be increased. In those circumstances it could not be left as it is because it would not be acting as a deterrent. Punishment by fine is supposed to be a deterrent, and if there are more people appearing before the courts the scale of the deterrent must be examined, otherwise there will be a loss of control. I must express a reservation about the recommendation in view of the circumstances that might develop if the Bill were to clear our procedures and become law.

1.15 pm

The Blennerhassett committee was not confronted by that proposition because it did not have the Bill before it, or any other Bill of this nature, when it made its recommendations. In another proposal it recommended the use of breath-testing machines to determine levels. I did not quite understand what the Committee meant and I thought that the right hon. Member for Castle Point might be able to help me. We are discussing an important Bill, and we are required to take into account the Blennerhassett committee's recommendatons. When there are implications of discretionary testing, surely we should have somebody in the Chamber who is competent to answer questions on breath-testing machines to determine the level of whatever was recommended by the committee. We have a lack of information on matters that are vital to those who are considering the Bill.

We have a Bill that in many ways is riddled with inadequacies. We have the problem of the three Conservative Members and their commercial interests——

Mr. Couchman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has referred to an issue that has been cleared more than once during the debate and I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think it necessary for the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to withdraw. He has referred in passing to hon. Members who have interests that have been declared. He is drawing attention only to that which has been said in the course of our proceedings.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I think that the hon. Member for Gillingham protesteth too much, but it is for the country to judge. As I have said, there is the problem of the three hon. Members. The right hon. Member for Castle Point, in so ably moving new clause 1, drew attention to the second problem, which is that the Bill was not even published. The right hon. Gentleman went to get a copy of the Bill and could not obtain one. There is an inadequacy in the way in which the House is being asked to deal with these matters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going very wide of the substance of the new clause.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall address myself directly to discretionary testing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Blennerhassett's fourth recommendation was retention of the legal upper limit of the present blood-alcohol levels. I do not know whether they are set at the right levels, but I believe that there would be an increased number of accidents if the Bill were to succeed and become an Act. It would then be necessary to re-examine the present levels. We might have to impose some new discipline. I am not necessarily in favour of that, but I propose that we may be driven to it by the fact that the police do not have the resources even to police—in the verbal sense—the present arrangements.

Under the proposals, we have the removal of the difficulties that have evolved in case law since 1967, so the proof of an offence does not rely unduly on the technicalities of compliance with detailed procedures. I find that case law usually defends the position of the civil libertarian. I do not express blanket opposition to that in the context of the introduction of a Bill of such an irresponsible nature that it may drive us to consider such matters. I should have hoped that one would have been inclined to secure a legislative framework within which it is not necessary to dismantle what had been built up in case law over a period of years. We may be driven to it. Such matters have not been taken into account.

In the view of some people, the first proposal would not be difficult to implement. The association in the present law between certain procedures such as those for making an arrest or taking tests and proof that an offence had been committed has greatly confused and inhibited its enforcement. In many cases, it has led to ludicrous results that have allowed those guilty of offences to go free but has provided no additional protection whatsoever for the innocent. I refer to the arguments that I have deployed. The recent removal of the right to jury trial will no doubt limit the incentive to produce spurious defences of one kind or another, but it is evident that legislation is needed to reform the law and the findings based upon it.

I am afraid that we are reforming the law—that is what we are doing today—but we are doing so in a way that acts in the public interest in a converse way to that which has been recommended by Blennerhassett. Yet hon. Members—not necessarily Conservative Members—who support the Bill do not deploy such arguments during the course of the debate.

In only one other western European country—the Republic of Ireland—is there a higher blood alcohol limit. Some countries have set lower limits. Some drivers are undoubtedly impaired below the present level, as I have suggested before. A recent OECD working party—I do not have to spell out what the words are; I am sure that the great majority of people know what OECD stands for—has noted that the average person can be shown to have some degree of impairment of blood-alcohol concentrations as low as 50 mg per 100 ml of blood, particularly if they are inexperienced as drinkers or as drivers, as most young people are.

That is an important matter. When the little old licensing justice considers a variation order and, in a back room, argues out the policy of the bench on the matter, he will have people pressing him to be more liberal and to increase the number of hours, and others pressing him not to increase them but to be more restrictive. Some people would argue that the law should be changed so that it works in the other direction and reduces the number of drinking hours. We have not even begun to consider the arguments that they might deploy. They might argue much of the case deployed by the hon. Member for Eastwood on new clause 1.

We must take account also of what can only be described as a revelation. It is the statement that many people have a degree of impairment at blood alcohol concentrations as low as 50 mg. We are basically saying that, by opening pubs longer, more people will have access to drink for greater periods during the day, which means that more people with blood alcohol concentrations of 50 mg and over will be in circulation, many of them young people. Many of those people will be incapable of driving, yet still driving. Those people will have been given a licence to drink and drive by the hon. Member for Eastwood and the commercial forces that have promoted the original legislation. Perhaps I should clarify that. I have just made a statement, but perhaps I was wrong. Is it the case that those who drew up the Bill had a connection with the licensing trade? Perhaps someone will deny that. No? It is now coming out. I presume—this is quite a development—that the Bill arose from discussions in the brewing industry and among the licensees and pub owners, and that they promoted it. I am sure that the public will understand the motivation behind the Bill and why three Conservative Members who had a direct commercial interest in the business were appointed to the Committee. It is obvious why they were there. The brewers promoted the Bill. They put their people on the Bill and then they drove through the sittings motion so that the Bill would be considered as fast as possible——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are appointed to Committees by the Selection Committee appointed by the House and by none other. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: From a sedentary position from behind me, I hear the voice of a man experienced in these matters—my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—who said that perhaps the

Selection Committee was wrong. Perhaps that should be taken into account by the Chairman of the Selection Committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members will reflect carefully on what they are alleging before they adversely raise questions about Committees appointed by the House.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I did not say that. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) misheard my muttering.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I unreservedly apologise to my hon. Friend if I misrepresented him in any way. I am sure that when he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will say what he said.

The licensing justices are in a difficult position. They must take into account the fact that evidence suggests that people with blood-alcohol concentrations of 50 mg and over may drive vehicles, have impaired judgment and may well be a danger to the general public. I put this proposition to the House: it is not in the public interest that those people should be allowed to use motor vehicles if their judgment is impaired, even though that is within the law. The licensing justices have a responsibility to take that into account in making their decisions. I should have thought that, when all the lobbies to which I referred start arguing about these matters, they should put that matter at the top of their agenda.

1.30 pm

At between 50 and 80 mg the degree of risk starts to rise. Increasing numbers of drivers will be on the road who are over the limit of 80 mg and, in the absence of discretionary testing, more will be allowed to drive under the Bill.

The present problem is the effective application of the law to drivers, a large number of whom are substantially above the existing limit. For the time being, as the Blennerhassett committee concluded, it is undoubtedly better to concentrate resources on them. What is important is that the Government preserve their existing option to have a lower limit at some stage, if in the future it can be shown that people below the present level are contributing substantially to the number of accidents. That is an interesting consideration, which we should take into account.

I put it to the House that we are legislating today for precisely that position. That is why the House should be full today: there should be 600 Members of Parliament arguing the case for road safety, and discussing whether young people should be allowed to drive in a state of inebriation. That is within the law as it stands, but surely the implication is that we may need at some time in the future to reconsider the law and reduce the limit.

The Blennerhassett report says that it is generally accepted that the existing penalties are, if effectively used, stiff enough to deter those capable of being deterred. The maximum level of fines has recently been increased, and in addition, insurance companies by increasing the premiums for convicted drivers, can impose a further substantial financial penalty. Some, no doubt, escape the full rigours of the penalty, either by driving when disqualified or by not admitting their conviction to insurance companies. But in the Committee's view there is no evidence that such people present a substantial problem. For most drivers who are likely to be deterred, the possible combination of a disqualification and a fine is an adequate threat. What is required the Committee says, is not so much a higher penalty as a greater likelihood that the penalty will be imposed.

But will that penalty be imposed? In my view, there is no such likelihood, because the Bill does not provide for the increasing resources needed by the police to ensure compliance with the existing legislation. The Bill's supporters have not dealt with that problem. They have simply imposed on the public a dollop of what they perceive to be more liberal legislation, and presumed that the civil authorities will be able to act in such a way as to secure and defend the public interest. But it will not work like that, and they know it. It is not fair to legislate without understanding the financial consequences of that legislation, but the financial consequences of this Bill have not been taken into account.

For my sins, I went into the Committee Room to watch the proceedings on the Bill for a short time from the public gallery. It struck me then that these matter were not being dealt with. When the right hon. Member for Castle Point tried to bring them into consideration, no one responded. The hon. Member for Eastwood responded briefly to his suggestions by saying that all such matters were covered by the legislation in Scotland. We shall deal with Scotland and its roads in a moment.

The hon. Gentleman always hid behind Scotland. He never addressed the problems in England. He did not deal with the resources that are necessary to secure greater policing for the implementation of his Bill, in particular for the implementation of the provisions in new clause 1 and amendment No. 6. I do not know where the hon. Gentleman lives in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I live in Glasgow.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am very pleased to hear that the hon. Gentleman lives in Glasgow. He will have noticed what I have noticed in Glasgow. It must disturb him, as it disturbs me and many people in Scotland. I refer to the alcoholism of many people who live in deprived conditions or who are unemployed. They find it very difficult to resist alcohol. Some people take a conscious decision to keep away from it. That can be very hard, particularly if one is living in very difficult circumstances.

In parts of Scotland, including Glasgow, there are appalling examples of the result of alcohol abuse. Scottish authorities, the police and many of the groups that have been set up to deal with the problem are very concerned about it. They never supported the Bill, and the hon. Member for Eastwood knows that they never supported the Bill. When they came to see hon. Members and wrote to us they said that they did not support the liberalisation arrangements in Scotland. Even today they write to us.

I have a very interesting article in my bag of tricks that was written by a Scottish journalist, following correspondence in the local newspaper. It drew attention to what is happening in Scotland, as against what the two researchers to whom I referred might think is happening in Scotland.

Does the hon. Member for Eastwood know the director and the senior lecturer of the alcohol studies centre at Paisley college of technology? Paisley is very near to Glasgow. This gentleman wrote an article in the *Glasgow Herald* on 10 January 1987 that was headed "Alcohol and Social Harm". That was long after the introduction of the

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

Scottish legislation to liberalise opening hours. His conclusions, particularly those that relate to the subject of the new clause and the amendment, are totally and utterly at variance with the conclusions that have been drawn by the hon. Gentleman.

This person is a director and a senior lecturer of the alcohol studies centre at Paisley college of technology. He is an expert on these matters. He is paid by the education authorities in Scotland to study the matter in depth, to write papers and to lecture on it. Why is it that he takes a completely different view from the whisky manufacturers in Scotland? Why is it that he also takes a completely different view from the three Conservative Members of Parliament who moved the sittings motion three weeks ago in Committee? Could it be that they gain financially from the industry, while he is required, as a researcher and a social scientist, to look objectively at these matters?

The hon. Member for Eastwood the promoter of the Bill, sits there and says nothing. Surely he can answer the simple question whether he knows this man. He does not respond. Let the record show that he does not respond. I ask whether he talked to this man.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I will not be provoked further by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He alleged that I have not met the gentleman in question. I do know the gentleman and I have certainly discussed these matters with him.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When the hon. Gentleman was discussing with Mr. S. J. Allsop, director and senior lecturer, those matters that are raised in the amendment that was tabled by the right hon. Member for Castle Point, who so ably and notably moved new clause 1 and amendment No. 7, why did he not ensure that this word was inserted in the original Bill? Why did he not move the amendment? Is he suggesting that he was unconvinced by the arguments deployed by Mr. Allsop, who, as I understand it, has repeatedly referred to road safety? Why did the hon. Gentleman ignore Mr. Allsop? After his conversations with Mr. Allsop, why did he not go to the Public Bill Office and table an amendment to his own Bill or have it modified in Committee? Why is it that those who were concerned about the Bill were left with the responsibility of tabling this highly important amendment? Could it possibly be that when the hon. Gentleman met Mr. S. J. Allsop, he simply switched off and just went through the motions? Could it be that he was simply not interested? Can the hon. Gentleman say whether he has amended the Bill in any way following the discussions that he had with the director and senior lecturer of the alcohol studies centre, Mr. Allsop? The hon. Gentleman does not respond. Therefore, I have to assume that the amendment arises from discussions that the hon. Gentleman must have had with people who are interested in the Bill and with the concerned lobby. It was the concerned lobby that produced the amendment on road safety and it was the commercial lobby that proceeded with a Bill that did not take into account the implications for road safety.

It seems to me that the commercial lobby — the brewers or whoever they are who are behind the Bill— have been very selective in the sort of Bill that they have produced. All they have done is look after their commercial interests. It might be that they would wish to take into account what I am about to say. Those who oppose the Bill, like me, do so because the Bill has been cheated through Parliament by commercial pressures exerted by three Conservative Members of Parliament. That is what repels and upsets us. That is why we are angry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If I heard the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) correctly, he alleges that the Bill has been "cheated through" Parliament with the aid of hon. Members who had a direct interest. If so, he must withdraw that remark.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I missed that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member alleged that the Bill had been "cheated through" Parliament with the assistance of hon. Members who had a direct interest in it. The hon. Member must not say that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps you would care to advise me what I am supposed to do. You say that I must not say that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am advising the hon. Member that he must withdraw the allegation that the Bill has been "cheated through" the House. I hope that he will do that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very respectful of our proceedings, despite the allegations that are frequently levelled against me. If you wish me to do that, I shall do that for you. I accept that. I have made my point and the record will show what I have said.

Mr. Allsop should be a key part of our considerations. I do not know whether he is in the House today but I, many of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members are grateful to him for the work that he has done and which I hope to deal with during the course of a debate on another amendment.

Perhaps I should resume my speech. I have been speaking almost two hours quite briefly actually. I have an abundance of material on which to draw and there are matters which, in my view have, not been deliberated upon adequately. My great sorrow is that because of the way in which the Bill was treated in Committee by the use of procedure, those matters will never be fully debated. The Bill has been rushed through and, during the debate on other amendments I shall deal with that matter in more detail.

1.45 pm

Sir Bernard Braine: I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) with great interest. However, I thought that he was a trifle unfair to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) who, at an earlier stage, indicated that he accepted the new clause and amendment No. 6. I wish that my hon. Friend and I could have somehow got together at a much earlier stage and, if there was to be a Bill, we could have framed a Bill that respected the principle of flexibility but would not have eroded the break in hours.

Before you put the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to say that I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood for accepting the new clause. It shows that we can make progress, albeit a little more slowly than some of us would have wished.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 1

VARIATION ORDERS ETC

Sir Bernard Braine: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 22, leave out '11.30 p.m.' and insert '11 p.m.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 13, in page 1, line 22, after '11.30 pm' insert

'with a two hour break between the opening hour and closing hour'.

Sir Bernard Braine: I move amendment No. 1 on behalf of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) who, unfortunately, has to fulfil a number of constituency engagements that were fixed a long time ago. In Committee the hon. Member for Newham, South was an absolute stalwart. He and I have been associated on Committees before. When I was Chairman of a Select Committee I could always rely on the hon. Gentleman to do his homework and make a positive contribution to our inquiries and investigations. I hope that he will be able to come to the Chamber in sufficient time to address himself to amendment No. 1, which is strictly his. I support it because it would bring the law in England and Wales into line with the terminal hour in Scotland. I see no reason why there should be a difference between the two jurisdictions.

Taken by itself the amendment does not affect the principle of flexibility enshrined in the Bill. However, I must confess that I would prefer the House to accept amendment No. 13, which would be a great safeguard while allowing a modest relaxation.

Both amendments relate to the central purpose of the Bill—the extension of drinking hours. The supporters of the Bill have tried to convince us all along that the question of the opening and closing hours of public houses is one of purely social convenience, having no other significance. I believe that, on that matter, the Bill's supporters are fundamentally mistaken. My view is shared by virtually all the expert bodies that have pronounced on the matter.

It cannot be emphasised too often that all the caring bodies — the medical profession, the British Medical Association, the royal colleges and countless other organisations — are opposed to the Bill anyway. Moreover, no evidence has been produced to show that there is any great public demand for change. That is what I find so astonishing. All this time, energy and eloquence have been spent on promoting a Bill for which there is no real public demand. If there had been, presumably the Government would have acted, but no Government have had the courage to do anything about licensing law. We are in the mess that we are in today over this Bill, as we were over previous private Members' licensing Bills, because Governments of the day failed to understand that licensing is far too important a matter to leave to private Members and to the chance of their getting a Bill through.

The majority of the public are, I believe, content with existing permitted hours. There is no mass movement to have the pubs open all day. The pressure for change comes not from the public but from the drink trade, the tourist boards and some national newspapers that have attempted to whip up public support for change, but without much success.

My main concern is with amendment No. 13. I cannot emphasise too much the importance of the historic break in continuous drinking, which has brought great benefits to our society in the present century. At present, when licensing magistrates deal with applications for extensions in the afternoon or in the early evening, they still insist upon a break of an hour or an hour and a half to prevent continuous drinking and the problems that they know it causes.

Since our deliberations in Committee, information has been passed to me that is of special interest in regard to continuous drinking. I hope that I shall not shock the House with what I am about to say. I refer to a report, I received only yesterday, by a ministerial committee of inquiry into violence. It was presented to the Minister of Justice of New Zealand in March 1987. I do not know whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has seen it yet, but it is worth reading from beginning to end and then re-reading. I am speaking of a country which, some years ago, I was invited to visit to advise on alcohol problems. I had the great pleasure and privilege of going from one end of New Zealand to the other, from Auckland in the north to Bluff in the south, where one stood on the cliffs and looked southwards 3,000 miles to the South Pole. It is a beautiful country and in many ways still a British country——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is all very interesting, but it does not have much to do with monitoring the effects of variation orders in England and Wales. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will address himself to the clause before the House.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am not surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have not yet seen the connection, but it is very close. The reason why I was saying something kind about New Zealand is that of all countries overseas—none is more remote from Britain than New Zealand—one will find a more British way of life there than anywhere else in the world. Therefore, in many ways New Zealanders still look to this country to set an example.

The report was presented in March this year to the New Zealand Minister of Justice. The committee, presided over by a distinguished High Court judge, examined the association between alcohol misuse and violent behaviour. It recommended

"a period of closure of public houses from 2 pm to 4 pm."

It then stated:

"Many English pubs are required to observe an afternoon closure and that must be regarded as one of the significant factors which enables English pubs to maintain a favourable image far removed from that of their New Zealand counterparts."

Perhaps you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can now see the connection. How ironic and how sad it is that we should contemplate the removal of the very element in our licensing law that another country, similar in outlook, seeks to emulate—and for such good reason.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way with his customary courtesy. I have no doubt that, given the present attendance in the Chamber, the rest of the time can be spent in civilised debate.

I wish to put two points to my right hon. Friend. First, there is a clear difference of principle between the two amendments under discussion. Amendment No. 1 does not conflict with the principle of flexibility, but amendment No. 13 does. Secondly, my right hon. Friend's amendment would not secure the afternoon break

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technically, because it would be open to a licensee to open at 9.30 in the morning and close at 9.35, for example. I do not want to detain my right hon. Friend because I think that it is right that he should have the balance of time between now and 2.30 pm.

Sir Bernard Braine: I always listen to my hon. Friend with the greatest of respect. Throughout our debates he has conducted himself with great courtesy and has always tried to be helpful. However, it would have been better if he had waited to see whether my proposed amendments were so far away from what he in his heart wants. There is plenty of time. It is clear that because of long speeches and interventions we are making slow progress, but I assume that we shall be at it again next Friday.

I do not interrupt other hon. Members' speeches until I begin to understand what they are driving at. In view of our discussions, I thought it important that the House should know that in New Zealand a departmental committee looking into the connection between violent crime and alcohol has recommended the introduction of a practice that this Bill seeks to injure, if not destroy. I thought it important to bring that to the attention of the House. Few Members may be here, but I guarantee that this piece of news will make good reading and will make an impact.

It is ironic that just when this Bill seeks to destroy a major safeguard for the British public, the New Zealanders should say, "The British have been so sensible over the years, we must copy them." What are we doing? We are abandoning a principal safeguard. The idea is so ludicrous that the Bill, despite any argument that I have advanced, will deservedly be laughed out of court.

2 pm

Amendment No. 13 would not require the two-hour break to occur in the afternoon. Therefore, it would not be inconsistent in any way with the priciple of flexibility. However, it is important to observe and record that in relation to the Scottish reform it was never the intention of Government or Parliament to abolish the afternoon break. Many of us may recall that in Standing Committee on the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, an amendment to abolish the afternoon break was heavily defeated. It would seem that that was a much more sensible Parliament than this one. The Government were explicit in their wish to retain that break. The large-scale disappearance of the afternoon break in Scotland has occurred since because loopholes were discovered in the legislation which permitted licensees, contrary to the wishes and intentions of Government and Parliament, to obtain all-day opening. That is how the matter arose in Scotland.

I have been careful not to say too much about the Scottish experience. I have an enormous respect for Scotland. I refer to Scotland as a kingdom where the law and people are different, and thank God for that. It is a great country.

We are concerned here, however, with a Bill that seeks to change licensing law in England and Wales, but it is relevant to say that the intention of Government and Parliament was frustrated with regard to the Scottish legislation. When we are seeking to change the law in England and Wales, it is as well that that should be remembered.

Some hon. Members may recall that the Erroll committee opposed the afternoon break because of its rigidity. Amendment No. 13 makes the break flexible so that it can occur at any period during the day. However, some break there should and must be. I should like to go into this matter in a little detail. The Erroll report grudgingly acknowledged the value of a break. In paragraph 11.42 it stated that it

"could still see a number of ways . . . in which it could be useful".

It went on to give an example where it might be very useful.

"It is possible, for example, that a local authority might conclude that an individual public house was being badly run and that insufficient attention was being paid to hygiene and cleanliness. In such cases, it might be reasonable for a local authority to conclude that some sort of break should be imposed to allow a licensee time to attend to these matters."

That is reasonable, is it not? Usually when the pub is open the licensee and staff are fully-stretched. Over the years I have known a great many licensees and they and their wives have always welcomed the idea of a break. I am not worried about licensees, but I am worried about the vested interests behind them which are seeking to sell more liquor. If licensees were freer to conduct their houses as they wished, we could trust them more. In general, they are decent and responsible people.

The Erroll committee referred to law and order, and I wish that some of my hon. Friends would recognise the serious part that alcohol plays in both petty and serious crimes. The liquor trade can never be allowed to be controlled by market forces. That is why the New Zealand Ministry of Justice has made its strong recommendation.

The Erroll report said:

"It is equally possible that disorder could arise at a particular public house either as a result of excessive drinking or in connection with some other event—for example, a football match. Here, a Chief Constable might well see some advantage in suggesting that individual public houses ought to be closed in the interests of public order."

Whatever harm was being caused when the Erroll committee deliberated has increased many times over since then, and every hon. Member knows that to be true.

The Erroll committee also foresaw the road safety problem. It referred to

"the suggestion by the Department of the Environment . . . that road safety could be endangered by drivers who had been drinking throughout the afternoon emerging into the afternoon rush hour."

As the Erroll committee could see that danger and as the situation has worsened since then, one would imagine that every hon. Member could see the danger. But no, the issue has been fudged and no reference has been made to it by the sponsors of the Bill.

A two-hour break could certainly be useful in areas where public houses are adjacent to schools. I suggest that licensing justices should vary orders in such cases.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my right hon. Friend agree that under the safeguards in the Bill it would be open to the licensing justices to refuse a variation order that did away with the two-hour break?

Sir Bernard Braine: Yes, but that is a cumbrous way of proceeding.

It is important to note that we discovered the relevance of road safety to licensing laws not just recently; it was foreseen by the Erroll committee. There was a problem then and there is an even greater problem now.

Amendment No. 13 would give the flexibility of a two-hour break without rigidity and would meet the Erroll committee's criteria. The committee said:

"In circumstances such as these, we would see some advantage if licensing justices were able to impose a compulsory break during the day, either at individual licensed premises within their area or more generally throughout the district. This power would enable justices to deal with particular abuses and should be capable of being used as a flexible instrument of control. We accordingly propose that the licensing justices should be empowered, on complaint, to impose a restriction of no more than two hours on the permitted hours of any licensed premises or group of licensed premises within their area. In order to restrict this power to the afternoon or early evening, however, it should be possible to impose such a break only up to 7.00 p.m. At the same time, we do not think this power ought to be absolute. In the interests of certainty, it would seem preferable to restrict the use of the power to circumstances where the justices are satisfied that it is necessary for the purposes of public order, safety, health or amenity."

The Erroll committee saw all this very clearly all those years ago. It is a matter of great surprise to me that private Members who have introduced Bills to amend the main licensing Act have never seen how necessary are safeguards of this kind—with the result that their Bills have always failed. As I have said before, this is far too important a matter to be left to the chance that a private Member might just strike the right balance and have the good fortune to get a measure through. Private Members' legislation will get through only if there is wide support in the House for a worthy measure and if the Government of the day give practical support, which they usually do not.

The Bill in its present form would provide the opportunity for licensees to obtain all-day opening, and we must assume that if it were enacted thousands would take advantage of that opportunity. Some supporters of the Bill, notably my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), have suggested that in practice a relatively small proportion of licensees will seek to open for the maximum permitted hours and that many, perhaps the majority, will be content with the benefit of flexibility provided by the Bill. My hon. Friend speaks with great authority and he has wide experience of these matters. When he is talking of things that he knows about, I listen with great respect. I am sure that he is right about this —at least speaking for himself. He is a very responsible man and he is speaking for himself. I do not ask him to agree or disagree, but I fear that we are not dealing with licensees who are completely free agents. We are dealing with a trade in which all kinds of pressures can be brought to bear, as I discovered when I first became involved in this business and found that many managers greatly resented the pressures placed upon them.

One cannot be absolutely positive about this, but I believe that once applications can be made for the maximum permitted hours, those hours will eventually become the norm. My position can be stated quite simply. If the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham is correct and the majority of licensees will not wish to take full advantage of the maximum hours permitted by the Bill, there can be little objection to amendment No. 13, so I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) will be prepared to accept it. If the suggestion is incorrect and the majority of licensees will seek to open for the maximum permitted hours, amendment No. 13 is a necessity to mitigate some of the worst effects of the Bill.

We are at an early stage in our discussions, and later amendments will bring out facts about the under-age drinking and appalling antisocial behaviour that may be encouraged by the Bill. It is a matter of grave concern to many people that they will certainly not be discouraged. Amendment No. 13 will be necessary to militate against some of the worst effects of the Bill.

2.15 pm

The possibility that the majority of public houses will wish to open for longer hours is by far the most likely. In those circumstances, we can pay close attention to the example of Scotland, where nearly 90 per cent. of public houses in the cities are open from 11 am until 11 pm. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) mentioned Mr. Douglas Allsop, the director of the Scottish Council on Alcoholism, whom I understand my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood has met. He is well known in the area of alcohol care and he believes that all-day opening has not brought benefits to Scotland.

If the prospect is that thousands of public houses will take advantage of the opportunity provided by the Bill for all-day opening, a major argument in favour of amendment No. 13 relates to the relationship between availability and consumption. There are plenty of statistics on this. I was not terribly impressed by what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said earlier about statistics. He quoted an OPCS survey which was based on self-reporting. Such surveys are unlikely to produce reliable figures because most people tend to underestimate their consumption.

No one would argue against the proposition that if many public houses open for a significant number of extra hours, alcohol consumption is likely to increase — perhaps substantially. I do not suppose that availability is the only factor in consumption and misuse. The effects of increased availability can be overriden by factors such as the state of the economy. That is what appears to have happened in Scotland, where licensing liberalisation was followed not long after by economic recession.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As a former Scottish Office Minister with responsibility for industry, may I tell my right hon. Friend that I do not accept his general proposition about the recession being more severe in Scotland than it was in England. That proposition is put forward by the Scottish National party in the context of other debates, but my right hon. Friend should know that I do not accept his argument.

Sir Bernard Braine: I did not argue that the economic recession was sharper in Scotland than in England. I said that licensing liberalisation was followed, not long after, by economic recession. That is a fact. I was not making a comparison with England, although I know that such comparisons have been made. However, the economy is now recovering health and vitality, and I am delighted that it is doing so in Scotland as well as in England. We know that the north of England and Scotland have suffered during the economic recession, but that is not peculiar to the United Kingdom. It has happened all over the Western world. The decline of the old basic industries has been followed by the movement of people in search of new industrial employment. In the United States, for example, such a movement has taken place from the north-east to the south-west. These things are happening all over the

[Sir Bernard Braine]

industrialised world. Scotland went through a difficult time, and it is good to know that things are now changing for the better there, as they are in England and Wales.

The future holds increased prosperity, not recession. That will tend to increase alcohol consumption, which has not declined in the past because people have gone off drinking beer or spirits, but because they have not had enough money in their pockets to indulge in their favourite pastime in more prosperous times.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people of the north are hard working? They have had a difficult time during the past few years, but the apparent drift to the south-east and west may well be reversed quite soon because the cost of living in the north and the renaissance of prosperity both there and in the midlands —particularly in my constituency—gives us every reason to suppose that there will be an equalisation and redistribution of wealth throughout the country. That will do much to improve the position to which my right hon. Friend has referred.

Sir Bernard Braine: I have never quarrelled with the facts of another man's experience. My hon. Friend knows about the midlands and I am sure that what he says is right. He is underlining my argument. As all parts of the United Kingdom become more prosperous, it is likely that consumption of alcohol will increase. That happens to be a common pattern. Thank God we have not yet reached the level of harm to health caused by alcohol that has been reached in France, Germany, Finland, Scandanavia or the Soviet Union. One of the most significant things that Mr. Gorbachev has said is that productivity in the Soviet Union has suffered grievously as a result of widespread drunkenness and alcoholic illness. We are nowhere near that level yet, but we have been moving in that direction. The bed occupancy in our hospitals of those suffering from alcohol-related illness is about half that of France, but it is increasing all the time. It may be expected therefore that, as we move into more prosperous times, the harm will increase unless there is more effective control, and that is what licensing is all about.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I accept entirely my right hon. Friend's proposition that there must be a relationship between total consumption and incomes, depending upon the relative price of alcohol, but that is not the relationship that the Bill is about. The Bill does not change incomes for the price of alcohol. The Bill is about changes in licensing hours.

Sir Bernard Braine: I note that the Bill is about availability; and the longer the hours, the greater the availability. That is fundamental. The Bill will increase the hours of drinking and encourage continuous drinking from lunch-time through the afternoon. If that becomes possible, there will be greater harm. The afternoon break has meant hitherto that drinking has stopped for a period, for during that time no more liquor can be consumed. It is a brief period but it is sufficient. It has provided a safeguard for the public and been a feature of British licensing law throughout the century, and the Bill seeks to breach that. If the Bill makes alcohol more easily available in a time of growing prosperity, there will be infinitely more harm done. That follows as surely as night follows day.

My hon. Friend—I say this sadly because I did not want him to walk into this one—talked about price. There we have it. It is strange that at a time when the cost to the individual of almost every commodity that we can think of has increased — disposable incomes have increased, too — the price of alcohol in terms of disposable income has fallen. Those who are in the drinks trade may feel that this is marvellous as a way of encouraging more consumption, but price is one of the major factors of controlling the consumption of alcohol. Successive Governments have failed to understand this. If we provide greater availability by means of extra hours and combine that with a Government policy that keeps the price of what is a potent drug below what it was 10 or 15 years ago, we are asking for trouble. It is a prescription for disaster.

We have not talked yet about teenage drinking in public houses, which is now a plague. It is becoming uncontrollable. When we have the opportunity, I shall give illustrations that have been culled from newspapers in every corner of the kingdom to show precisely what is happening.

The harm is increasing. Youngsters of 13, 14 and 15 years of age tipple in pubs. What has happened to licensees — the splendid people who are supposed to control public houses? They will lose their licences. We are allowing this to happen under our very noses. It has to stop. That is one reason why I condemn the Bill. It is the wrong time and the wrong place further to liberalise drinking hours. I beg my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood to see that we are trying to save him from being the author of—

It being half-past Two o'clock further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

To be further considered on Friday 8 May.

Private Members' Bills

COMPANIES (AUDIT COMMITTEES) BILL

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bill).

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [6 February.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Not moved.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has missed the boat.

HOUSING (HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [13 February.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

NON-PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANIES (APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

PLANNING PERMISSION (DEMOLITION OF HOUSES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member should allow me to put the Question.

The Question is, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That objection was not made in time. Therefore, the Second reading takes place now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has not moved the motion. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dykes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think I am right in assuming that you were plainly waiting for an objection, but it was not uttered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was plainly waiting for the hon. Member to move the motion, which he failed to do. He has now missed his chance.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that I have dealt with the hon. Member's point of order. He quite clearly missed the boat.

Mr. Dykes: On another point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course that might be assumed, but why, then, was the objection uttered after your second pronouncement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If I recall, the objection was taken before I proposed the Question. That is within my clear recollection. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dykes: Under protest, Friday 15 May.

OPTICAL APPLIANCES (BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED PERSONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not stand when I am on my feet. I heard, "Objection taken".

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Bill will eliminate the disgrace in retirement of the poverty in which millions of old people have to live. I heard no objection to that Bill, and therefore I assume——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair clearly heard an objection. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There has been an interesting development with Government business in the past few days. I should like you to have a word with Mr. Speaker to try to find out how many times since the end of the war Governments have taken over Bills that have been introduced by private Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I am coming to the point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must deal with one matter at a time. The hon. Member is raising what seems to be a quite separate matter.

Mr. Skinner: No, it is not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not denying the hon. Member the opportunity to raise his point of order. It seems to be a different matter.

Mr. Skinner: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will quickly show me how it links with the point with which we are dealing.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, absolutely, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was trying to introduce a Bill to give pensioners an extra £20 a week. The Government now say that they do not have any time. Last night the House adjourned three hours early, and the night before it adjourned an hour early. It would not be a bad idea, if they can change their minds on dumping nuclear waste in Tory constituencies, for the Government to change their mind about——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have heard more than sufficient. The hon. Member knows how we deal with private Members' Business. He knows that we decide how much time should be allocated to deal with private Members' Bills, and when. This is one of the days allocated by the House for dealing with this Bill. It may well be open to the Government to allocate time, but that is not the Question before the House today.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you can help the House. I have absolutely no doubt, because you have said so, that you heard an hon. Member say, "Object", but would it not be for the convenience of the House if the mover of the motion and every other hon. Member in the House could hear when some seedy, corrosive, secreted Member objects, so that we know who he is?

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)——

Mr. Skinner: I can help, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not persist in standing when I am on my feet.

Mr. Skinner: I want to help you, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member must not persist in interrupting me either, or I am afraid that I shall have to send him off for an early weekend.

Mr. Skinner: If I can just help you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) who, acting on behalf of the Prime Minister, objected.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have repeatedly heard over the past few weeks that the Government are committed to the elimination of poverty. A Government Whip who must remain unnamed——

Mr. Skinner: I have named him.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We do not need to identify him. He has today objected to a Bill introduced by a Labour Back-Bencher to eliminate poverty for pensioners. There will be no debate because the proceedings of the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has been in the House on previous Fridays when we have had exactly the same problem and he has listened to exactly the same replies and explanations by me from the Chair. Now that the House seems to be satisfied that there was a genuine objection, confirming what I clearly heard, I hope that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will give us the date on which he hopes the Bill will be given a Second Reading. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Corbyn: We had wished to have the Second Reading on this day, but I understand that the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), acting on behalf of the Government——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member raising a further point of order?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, Sir. The Bill was granted its First Reading unopposed. There was no Division. There were plenty of opportunities for such a Division, when hon. Members could have had their votes recorded as being for or against a measure to eliminate poverty in retirement——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will get to a point of order with which I may deal.

Mr. Corbyn: My point of order is this, Sir. If the House agreed that the Bill should have a First Reading—as it did a long time ago—why are Members of Parliament now allowed to prevent the debate from taking place without their names being recorded? I understand that the hon. Member for Watford, acting on behalf of the Prime Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows perfectly well, because in the past he has raised exactly the same points and has heard me and other occupants of the Chair rule, that these matters are not for the Chair. What we are doing today, and what has been done, is entirely in accordance with our long-established practices and procedures. I hope that we can now proceed.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask you to assist the House by conveying to Mr. Speaker the wishes of many of us that there should be a re-examinaion of this procedure of anonymity being preserved, like the hon. Member for Watford——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows perfectly well that a Committee has been set up by the House to look at procedure. The hon. Member has been advised previously that, if he is not satisfied with the procedures as they exist, the Procedure Committee should be made aware of his complaint. No doubt what has been said today will be read in the *Official Report* by members of the Committee on Procedure. Does the hon. Member wish to give me a day for the Second Reading?

Mr. Corbyn: Friday 12 June.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 May.

HOUSEBUYERS' PROTECTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

PENSIONERS' RIGHT TO FUEL AND COMMUNICATIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not sure who objected to the measure to allow pensioners to live warmly in their homes throughout the winter. Will you convey to the House whether you heard the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) once again act on behalf of the Prime Minister to deny that to them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that what we are doing now is no different from what normally happens, when the occupant of the Chair puts to the House any Question before it and must collect the voices without necessarily requiring hon. Members either to stand or to identify themselves. That has been explained to the hon. Gentleman and to the House on previous occasions.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has just crossed my mind that the other night we had a

pensions Bill before us. I think that you were in the Chair at the time. However, it was not intended to cover the needs of the 9·5 million pensioners in the country. It was a parliamentary pensions Bill to provide fuel, light and heat for those who happen to come into this place and, perhaps, manage to occupy the Chair. This is a scandal. It really is a carry-on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that that is not a point of order for me, and he knows equally well that he is testing my patience.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

INFANT LIFE (PRESERVATION) AND PATERNAL RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): With the authority of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), Friday 8 May.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, arising on the previous Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have passed that.

Mr. Corbyn: The point of order is about today's business. Will you inform the House whether you recollect hearing the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) object to the Pensioners' Right to Fuel and Communications Bill, and whether his name will therefore be recorded in *Hansard* as that of the hon. Member who denied pensioners a warm home throughout the winter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No doubt it will be, now that the matter has been raised. However the Chair deprecates this kind of practice, which is contrary to our usual procedures and may eventualy turn out to be counter-productive. I must warn the House about that.

INTOXICATING SUBSTANCES (SUPPLY) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS (PROHIBITION AT ELECTION TIMES) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1986 (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): Now, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman acting with the authority of the promoter?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I am, Sir.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Committee of the whole House—[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Committee what day?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: Friday 8 May.

LONDON GOVERNMENT AND OTHER COUNCILS (ANNUAL ELECTIONS) BILL

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No day named.

PATENTS AMENDMENT BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like my name to be recorded as objecting to the Bill.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

BILLIARDS (ABOLITION OF RESTRICTIONS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Motion made and Question proposed.

That Standing Committee C be discharged from considering the Billiards (Abolition of Restrictions) Bill *[Lords]* and that the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Pike.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Question is, That Standing Committee C——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am proposing the Question.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is shouting at me in a threatening manner for having objected to his Bill. I think that it should be put on the record, so that the whole House knows what he is saying to an hon. Member who objected to his disgraceful Bill.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Anything that I have to say to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) can be recorded at any time. My views on him, and on what he has to say and the way in which he conducts himself, are well known.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time. The Chair deprecates interventions of any kind from a sedentary position. The Chair equally deprecates the kind of exchanges that we are having this afternoon. I hope that hon. Members are aware that they do little to add to the dignity of the House.

Mr. Sedgemore: Perhaps I can help the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I heard the remark. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was called a pathetic little something, which I imagine was akin to the kind of language that is used by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that we have dealt with that matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Basildon (District Council Finance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.46 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Throughout the four years that I have represented Basildon in this House I have been pleased to see the town grow, develop and blossom into what it is today — quite the finest town in the country. I pay tribute to all those, who have worked to make it so, particularly the original new town pioneers. So successful is Basildon today that I have recently suggested that it, rather than Chelmsford, should be the county town of Essex. That in no way reflects upon the wonderful representation that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) has given to that constituency. Instead it reflects on the muck-up that the Liberals have made of the town, in particular of the road system. Furthermore, its population makes Basildon the natural county town.

Ever since I have been a Member of Parliament I have interested myself in local government legislation and finance. I served as a Redbridge councillor. Redbridge is an excellently run local authority. Furthermore, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who is to reply to the debate, led Wandsworth with great distinction. The financial policy and political posturing of Basildon district council therefore came as a great shock to me initially. Redbridge was always concerned with the provision of cost-effective and efficient services. Unfortunately, Basildon district council has consistently wasted ratepayers' money on propaganda and political indoctrination instead of concentrating on its specific duties as a district council.

All hon. Members are concerned about the difficulties involved in providing sufficient jobs for all those who wish to work. High rates unquestionably destroy jobs, and particularly small businesses. Indeed, high rates stunt the growth of all businesses. In 1983 my council imposed high rates, and I believed it to be my duty to seek relief for my constituents. It was for that reason that I decided to make my maiden speech on the Rates Bill 1984. I certainly do not regret that decision.

Locally, the Opposition roundly condemned me for my support of rate capping and launched a vicious and offensive campaign against me. Everything I said at that time has been subsequently vindicated by quite extraordinary events within the local Labour party. Two Labour councillors last year resigned from the party in disgust at what had been going on within their ranks and there is now a hung council in Basildon. One of these two councillors, in his resignation statement said:

> "I will now vote in line with my conscience. The Labour party I knew and believed in is not the Labour party of today. Militant is on the rise, even in places such as Basildon."

Both councillors spoke of intimidation and of the party spending money in wards not in line with need but rather in line with enhancing the electoral chances of the party retaining seats in those wards. The Government were right to cap Basildon rates in 1984, just as they are right to cap them today. My constituents and I welcome the relief to ratepayers that that action has brought.

Through rate capping the Government have protected ratepayers from what would otherwise have been an enormous rate increase such as those imposed in councils such as Waltham Forest and Ealing. It is because the rates were capped that the district council rate increase is so small this year. I congratulate the Government on that. All the allegations about services being decimated as a result have been proved to be completely without foundation.

I draw the attention of the House to a number of areas of expense locally that I believe should be of concern to us all. The first area is that of so-called public relations. The council spends an enormous amount of ratepayers' money each year on propaganda. If it is as good a council as it claims to be, I cannot understand why it needs such a large PR department to tell people how good it is. How could anyone justify a small district council spending over £344,000 on PR and employing a PR department with 12 staff? All hon. Members are only too well aware of the double standards of the Liberal party. There are many examples we can draw on, but the example I wish to draw attention to is that of the Bill to outlaw political propaganda, on which the Liberal party voted in favour of the Second Reading but hypocritically voted against on the Third Reading.

All the time locally we have to put up with the nonsense of the Liberals claiming credit for things that they have had absolutely no hand in, trying to please everyone and adopting their traditional policy, replacing paving stones and having dog mess cleaned up, while they never admit to being what they are—Socialists who smile. We have heard quite clearly from the mouth of the leader of the Liberal party that, while they would never support a Conservative Government, they cannot wait to jump into bed with the Labour party.

The Under-Secretary of State will be well aware of the discussions that have taken place in Basildon over the transfer of New Towns Commission properties. Over the past few months people have been subjected to a barrage of Labour party propaganda, all at the ratepayers' expense, that culminated in the so-called referendum to determine the wishes of the people of Basildon. An expensive video was made in which an EastEnders star appeared. Some of the participants have subsequently reported that they had no idea how biased the video would be. The referendum turned out to be a farce, as the council could hardly offer any alternatives when the Government were not in possession of what those alternatives might be. In all the publicity, the impression was given that the choice lay between either a wicked, grasping, heartless private landlord or the kindly, caring, paternal council. I find it utterly contemptible that during the course of the campaign elderly people were frightened by being told that bodies other than the council would put their rents up, not carry out repairs and even evict them. Of course, what people were not told is that Basildon ratepayers had to contribute some £907,000 to the housing revenue account last year and it is planned to take some £1,285,000 from us this year just to balance the books.

People were not told that, whereas the cost for administration for each of the New Towns Commission 16,000 houses is under £100 per year, the figure for the council is £380 a year. Therefore, rents would have to rise by at least £5·40 per week. People were not told that in 1976, when there was a Labour Government, the council turned down the chance to take over the commission housing. As well as that refusal, it has had the chance, by giving six months' notice to the Government, to assist in the handover. The speed with which the so-called

referendum was mounted had nothing to do with housing need but everything to do with trying to influence the outcome of the local election on 7 May.

There are further examples of expenditure that should be closely examined. For example, there is a theatre grant of £85,000, a publicity grant for £65,000, a CNT housing transfer grant of £135,000, consultancies costing £70,000, a peace festival costing £2,000, the Essex and Herts study on the effects of war costing £5,000, a women's committee costing £20,000—that does not include the cost of a women's officer post—a public relations consultancy costing £16,000—occupied by someone who apparently advises Brent on education matters—Seeds—a Labour party group of councillors—costing £11,000 and an ex-Greater London Council councillor who set up GLEB is paid approximately £17,500. The new theatre will cost the ratepayer approximately £1·5 million a year.

All that spending is taking place against a background of deception of the ratepayers by suggesting that somehow there will be no cost to them. Massive loans have been taken out by the council, in the guise of private companies, on deferred payment terms, the first payment for which will fall due in 1988. The council hopes that before then a Labour Government will be in power to bail it out. As we all know, and as the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) has said, there will not be a Labour Government. Even if there were to be a Labour Government, they would certainly not bail out Basildon district council.

Assuming that rate limitation keeps expenditure to £13·9 million the following deficits would result: in 1988-89 £7·6 million, 1989-90 £11·1 million and in 1990 £13·1 million. By so-called creative accountancy the council has set up companies to manage various projects. It is the height of hypocrisy for the Socialist council to use City institutions to finance grandiose schemes while thinking that we are daft enough to believe that all that can be done without any cost to the ratepayer. With such heavy expenditure already projected, it begs the question of how the council can possibly justify taking on an even larger debt of £17 million to acquire the town centre?

If there really is all that spare money lying around it is a pity that it could not be used to do something about the housing waiting lists or council properties that are in urgent need of repair. The council has spent extraordinary amounts of money on a system it called "going local", an attempt to bring the council closer to the people. The reaction I have had from people at my surgeries has been negative. Anything that requires a decision has to be put off until the central administration has been contacted. The result is delay and frustration. I can conclude only that that expensive venture has served to add another tier to an already bloated bureaucracy. Far from bringing the council closer to the people, it has moved the decision-making power even further away from them.

If the council wants to know whether the money is needed, I have many filing cabinets in my office full of genuine pleas for assistance. The money spent on the housing referendum was a shameless abuse of its position and a betrayal of its duties to the people of Basildon.

This is not the first time that that has happened. Not long ago, the council held a similar survey on education, a matter for which it has no responsibility. The concern was not genuine, rather a cynical attempt to stir up discontent. As if that was not bad enough, it is now seeking to pump out its propaganda on a new local radio station and television network over which the council hopes to have considerable influence.

If a hung council were effective, all that nonsense could be stopped, but even the nuclear free-zone signs are still up as the Liberals, in their guise of disarmers, still support them. Only this week a glossy booklet dropped through every single door in Basildon, having been posted, printed and published at the ratepayers' expense. It is entitled "Pledge to Homeowners" and is designed to influence the outcome of the local elections. It contains utter drivel and gives the impression of being in favour of home ownership when everyone in the House knows that the local council in Basildon cannot wait to get its hands on the council and New Towns Commission properties that have been sold.

For my part, I hope that we can have more shared ownership schemes in Basildon, small units for single people and low-cost housing, particularly to attract more teachers to the area. I also hope that people living in Felmores and Langdon Hills will be relieved of the burden of the district heating system and have individual gas-fired central heating.

Central Government policy towards Basildon district council finance has correctly protected my constituents from the worst excesses of socialism. Rate-capping as an interim measure has proved effective. We all welcome and look forward to the introduction of the community charge.

3.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on once again drawing to the attention of the House the horror story that is Basildon district council. I remember well his maiden speech on that subject and serving with him on Committees on the Rates Bill and on the Local Government Bill. It is with some dismay that I hear today that things have gone from bad to worse, although, with the local elections coming up, there is the prospect that the people of Basildon will take a hold on events and bring the council back to its senses.

If the control of the council is not changed, the prospects are serious, My hon. Friend referred to Basildon council's document entitled "Pledge to Homeowners". I am amazed that any responsible local authority can think it reasonable, during a local election campaign, to send out a glossy brochure. I have no idea how much it cost to produce, but it runs to 16 pages and is in full colour. It sets out that council's objectives. It is being distributed to every house in the council area during the election campaign. Obviously, it is designed to influence the outcome of the election. I notice that it does not have an imprint on it, but I should have thought that it was one of the most amazing documents that we have had a chance to see being distributed by a Labour council to try to influence the electorate.

I wonder what people would think if, during a general election campaign—as there must be in the next 15 months or so—the Government decided to distribute leaflets like that document to every house in the country, at enormous expense, on the basis that it was just information. People would say that it did not wash. No responsible Government would be allowed to do it. If Basildon council can do that within the law—I have my doubts whether it is lawful—the law should be changed.

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

The finances of Basildon district council are an horrific story. Its current spending has gone up an incredible 44 per cent. in real terms since 1979 despite having been selected for rate limitation in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88. I am pleased to say, however, that rate limitation is protecting ratepayers to some extent. Basildon's rate limit in 1987-88 was only 0·2 per cent. up on last year—well below what it would have been otherwise. Indeed, the local rate was only 5 per cent. above the level of two years ago—half the shire district average increase over the same period and well below inflation.

At 52·84p in the pound the local rate is, however, still far too high—double the average rate for shire districts. The 1987-88 budget of £16·911 million is more than £3 million above the expenditure level set by the Government and a massive 112 per cent. over its grant related expenditure assessment. The enormous financing gap has been met by raiding balances. My hon. Friend also mentioned the setting up of bogus companies to defer the cost of current spending into the future.

I have seen the figures produced by the council setting out the implications. If the council, on a neutral basis, were going to inform the residents of the issues in a local election campaign, it should say that on present policies it will spend £17 million in 1987-88 and, without any new spending plans, because of the commitment decisions already taken, in three years' time that will go up to £27 million. How can the people of Basildon afford to pay that?

For the time being rate limitation will continue, and for the future we have set our plans for comprehensive rates reform. On that score my hon. Friend may like to be aware that had the community charge been in operation last year bills per adult in Basildon would have been £240 compared with the £300 average that was actually charged in domestic rates.

Even with high spending there will be some relief when the community charge is introduced after the next general election. Businesses could also have been benefited from an average 8 per cent. reduction in rate bills as a result of the introduction of the national non-domestic rate.

My hon. Friend has raised the question of the new town housing at Basildon. I very much regret tht the council saw fit to spend the ratepayers' money on a misconceived "referendum" of the new town tenants. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State made it plain to the council before it embarked on this, that its referendum would not be treated by the Government as a worthwhile demonstration of the wishes of new town tenants on the future of their houses. I regret that this did not prevent the council from going ahead with its referendum, and with a grossly tendentious video in support of its case for a transfer of new town houses into its own ownership.

The leader of the council has written to my right hon. Friend reporting the results of the referendum held in late March. The results show that a high percentage of respondents want a vote before a decision is taken on the houses. We have been saying for over a year that we will consult on the options of the transfer to the council and a detailed, practical alternative. The exact arrangements for that consultation are something which the Department will wish to discuss with the council, and the Commission for New Towns in due course.

The results also show that a high percentage of respondents want to see transfer to the council as one of the alternatives put forward in the consultation. We have never suggested otherwise.

Finally, the results show that, on the basis of what they have "learnt so far", the great majority of respondents favour transfer to the council. Any other result would be extremely surprising, given that no alternative has so far been put forward for the tenants to consider. All that tenants have had to go on is council propaganda typified by a highly misleading video portraying housing associations as incompetent and uncaring landlords.

My hon. Friend referred to the time when I was leader of Wandsworth council. When we took over from the Socialists in 1978, the Labour council had been hostile towards the housing association movement. The same basic antipathy towards housing associations is now exhibited by the Socialists in Basildon. We often hear suggestions that the Conservative party is not as friendly as it could be to housing associations, but the truth is the reverse. We support the voluntary sector in housing, but the Labour party, which in some areas has come round to supporting housing associations, in the most hardened areas, such as Basildon, still regards the voluntary housing movement as something which should not be trusted.

We want to make arrangements, as soon as possible, for a proper consultation of the new town tenants at Basildon. The council will have a major part to play in that process. The main concern for all prospective landlords, as well as for the commission and the Government, should be to ensure that the tenants have good, objective information on which to judge which landlord would be best for them. For our part, we will respect the wishes of the tenants expressed in a properly organised consultation process.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the location of Essex county hall. I must tell him that this is a matter for the county council. He also drew attention to the Felmores district heating system. I can assure him that my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be writing to my hon. Friend on this matter shortly.

I also note my hon. Friend's concern about low-cost housing. The effects of the initiatives which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction mentioned in reply to my hon. Friend's Adjournment debate on 4 November will in due course be felt in the London region, where it is so difficult for young people to find homes.

I am concerned that my hon. Friend's speech will not be as widely circulated to the people of Basildon as this leaflet. His speech deserves to be widely circulated to them and I hope that between now and polling day his remarks will be drawn to the attention of Basildon's electorate.

One matter is certain. Without the diligence of my hon. Friend in representing the people of Basildon, their lot would be even more sorry than it is at the moment. My hon. Friend has referred to his important role in the enactment of the rate-capping legislation, which was opposed by the Opposition parties, and he has also drawn attention to the fact that it was only the Conservatives who were in favour of banning propoganda on the rates.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Eleven minutes past Three o'clock till Tuesday 5 May, pursuant to the resolution of the House of 2 April.

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 May 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PONTYPRIDD MARKETS FAIRS AND TOWN HALL BILL
Lords amendments agreed to.

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday 7 May.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 7 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

NATO (Discussions)

1. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with Defence Ministers in other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): I have regular collective meetings with my ministerial colleagues in NATO as well as, from time to time, bilateral visits and meetings. A wide range of subjects of mutual defence interest are discussed at such meetings.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there could yet be a sting in the tail in the new climate on nuclear arms reductions? Does he agree that if all short-range and medium-range nuclear weapons were removed from Europe now, NATO would be left facing the Warsaw Pact in a position of great conventional inferiority? Would that not increase, rather than decrease, the risk of war? If my right hon. Friend agrees with me, will he ensure that his fellow Defence Ministers realise that as well?

Mr. Younger: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. In considering the recent proposal by Mr. Gorbachev we need to bear in mind NATO's overall deterrence requirements in the light of the totality of the threat that is facing us. I shall certainly take up that matter with my NATO colleagues when next I meet them.

Mr. Mason: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what is the evaluation of the Secretary-General of NATO of the Soviet proposals on cuts in nuclear missiles in Europe? Is there any difference between the position of the right hon. Gentleman's Ministry and that of the Secretary-General of NATO? What progress can he report to the House on the matter?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's concern about this issue. The Soviet proposals to extend the zero option further down the scale from the longer range intermediate missiles are being carefully studied throughout NATO. I certainly hope that agreement can be reached in this area in the near future. It would be an historic agreement if we could get it. It is most important to examine all the implications. All our allies are doing so, and we shall be doing so with them.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: What discussions has my right hon. Friend had with his colleagues about the gross disparity in chemical weapons in Europe? Is he aware of the considerable feeling that in any future conflict the forces of the West would start with a great disadvantage? General Rogers has mentioned the possibility of the Soviets firing one chemical weapon on the front at each corps, and the effect that that would have. What new proposals will NATO come up with?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct, in that the existence of large Soviet stockpiles of chemical weapons is a serious threat to our forces and the balance of forces between East and West. We have made it clear that that matter will have to be addressed, along with the imbalance of conventional forces if further proposals for arms control are to be considered.

Mr. Beith: In view of the Government's indications that the West should have the power to match the numbers of Soviet short-range nuclear weapons, do NATO Ministers have any plans for the manufacture of such weapons? What will they cost, and in which countries will they be deployed?

Mr. Younger: There are no such plans at the present time, but of course this is one of the factors that will have to be considered by the allies when considering the suggestion by Mr. Gorbachev that we should look for a zero option lower down the scale from the intermediate nuclear weapons.

Mr. Cormack: Do my right hon. Friend and his colleagues agree that while hopes are justified, euphoria is certainly premature, and that it is absolutely essential that unity is maintained, because lack of it would be fatal?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The recent move by the Soviet Union shows that it has at long last come to the same proposals as the West has been pressing upon the Soviet Union for several years. That is solely because we did not listen to the siren voices of the Opposition and other people who would have had us give up these negotiating cards before they were of any use. My hon. Friend is right in saying that we have to be careful that before we agree to any deal we make sure that it works.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Does the Secretary of State not agree that since the Russians have a 3:1 superiority in medium-range weapons, that is SS20s, cruise and Pershing IIs, and a 9:1 superiority in short-range weapons, it is in the West's interests to agree to these proposals, subject to suitable verification, because such an agreement would enhance our security? Will he deny press reports that as a kind of macabre compensation for that scheme the Government intend to have more F111s at Upper Heyford and Lakenheath and more hydrogen bombs as a result of that agreement?

Mr. Younger: In reply to the right hon. Gentleman's latter point, we have no plans of that kind. On his former point, he is right to consider the question of imbalances at lower levels as well as at higher levels. It is not as simple as he says, in that one can take each category of weapons totally separately from any other. Therefore, that is why the new proposal by Mr. Gorbachev that we should look at a zero option below the intermediate range-long range level must be studied very carefully by all the NATO allies. We shall play our part in that.

NATO (Discussions)

2. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to meet the Soviet Union Defence Minister to discuss deployment of nuclear and conventional forces in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I have no plans to meet the Soviet Defence Minister. The United Kingdom plays a full part in the multilateral negotiations and discussions aimed at reducing conventional forces in Europe and, together with other members of NATO, consults closely with the United States on the bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union on nuclear and space issues taking place in Geneva. We also play a leading role in the conference on disarmament, which is concerned principally with achieving a global ban on chemical weapons.

Mr. Stevens: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply and welcome all the initiatives being taken in furtherance of negotiations to reduce armaments. Does he agree that the security of Europe will rely on the nuclear deterrent as long as the Soviet Union and its allies have massive superiority in chemical weapons and in conventional forces?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend that deterrence combined with a flexible response certainly is, and has for some time been, the basis of the NATO Alliance's defensive posture. That has been supported by successive Governments. We should be very careful that these desirable developments in arms control do not put that at risk, and the Government intend to exercise that care.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Secretary of State aware that while the Prime Minister and Chancellor Kohl go on dragging their feet over the zero-zero option there will be pressure on this country to accept balancing increments of nuclear weapons, not merely at airfields in Oxfordshire and in East Anglia, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has warned, but at Holy Loch? Does he think that public opinion will stand for that? Does he want that exposed in the coming general election?

Mr. Younger: Those appear to be the hon. Gentleman's proposals, which certainly have nothing to do with me. I have no doubt that public opinion would stand whatever was put to it as a tenable case in these matters by the hon. Gentleman or by anyone else. The hon. Gentleman asked about balancing. These weapons systems must be looked at as a whole to see whether they enhance or degrade our deterrent posture, combined with flexible response. We must do nothing in haste to put that in danger.

Mr. Couchman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm once again that Trident represents very good value in terms of its deterrent effect? Will he tell the House once again exactly what the unwise cancellation of Trident might mean if the money were devoted to upgrading conventional weapons, and how little that would mean in terms of the overall imbalance of conventional forces in Europe?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. There is no way in which the vital deterrent effect of the present Polaris and the future Trident programme could be replaced by the expenditure of any realistic sum of money on conventional weapons instead. It is simply not possible. On cancellation costs, it is very difficult to calculate in the abstract what would happen if this were done. Apart from losing a vast amount of jobs, there would probably be only a certain amount of the Trident money left to spend on other matters. Even if all of the money was used, it could provide only about one extra armoured division, which would make no detectable difference to the huge conventional imbalance that we presently face.

Mr. Cartwright: While it is perfectly correct that in the future NATO's deterrence must rest on a mix of nuclear and conventional capability, does the Secretary of State not accept the view of his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that if we were to remove all the intermediate range nuclear weapons, NATO would retain over 4,500 nuclear warheads in Europe? Is that not quite sufficient on which to base nuclear deterrence?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point, but that is a considerable development on anything that my right hon. and learned Friend said, although I did notice something like that was said by Richard Perle recently. It is not possible sensibly to look at only that aspect. It is important to look at the whole range of weapons that would be available to the Western Alliance to maintain flexible response. It is the flexibility of the response that is the strength upon which NATO's strategy is based.

Mr. Adley: Assuming that my right hon. Friend, with responsibility for security, is aware that I was in Hungary last week, is he aware that during an interesting discussion with the mayor of a town called Gyula, which is on the Romanian border, and in the light of his earlier comments about Mr. Gorbachev, I asked the mayor whether he could envisage the day when Hungary might, of its own volition, leave the Warsaw pact. The mayor replied that even if such a delightful situation were to arise, it would be meaningless because the Soviet border was merely 160 km away. Does my right hon. Friend not agree that that is the chilling reality of life in Eastern Europe?

Mr. Younger: I confess to my hon. Friend that I was not following his travels in Hungary with great closeness, but he makes the valuable point that it is no use letting our

enthusiasm for arms control, great though that is, blind us to the effects of any changes that are made. It is our responsibility to make sure that the reductions in those weapons systems that we hope will take place will not remove NATO's ability to deter attacks flexibly.

Mr. McNamara: When the Americans are negotiating on behalf of Her Majesty's Government with the Russians, will the Americans be confirming on behalf of the Government that no decision has yet been taken on the replacement of the existing 155 mm nuclear artillery rounds deployed in Europe? If the Americans are to say that on our behalf, are his right hon. and hon. Friends going to sue Peter Kellner and *The Independent* for accusing them of telling lies in this House? If they are not going to sue, will they apologise to the House for making material inaccuracies on a matter of such importance?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure to what the hon. Gentleman is referring, but no such statement has been made and no such decision has been taken. Sueing people is not a matter for me.

Strategic Defence Initiative

3. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what further consultations his Department has had over the strategic defence initiative testing programme being drawn up by the United States of America.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Archie Hamilton): We are in regular contact with the United States authorities over the SDI research programme.

Mr. Boyes: Will the Minister inform the House whether he intends to discuss with the United States the SDI testing of the patriot anti-aircraft missile or the development of the Rapier missile as an anti-tactical weapon? Does he agree that if any such testing takes place it will be a major breach of the ABM treaty?

Mr. Hamilton: Testing missiles is a matter for the United States. We have no locus in the interpretation of the ABM treaty.

Mr. Forth: Is my hon. Friend confident that what is being developed at the moment by our friend and alley the United States is within the ABM treaty? Will he state the number of British firms that have contracts for SDI, and the value of those contracts in terms of either money or jobs?

Mr. Hamilton: Some $34 million worth of contracts have been awarded already to British industry. A total of 400 companies and 100 academic institutions have expressed interest, and 36 are now involved. Therefore, it is certainly in our interests and we are going ahead with it.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister must reflect on the answer he has given in relation to the interpretation of the ABM treaty. Is it not a fact that Her Majesty's Government have a memorandum of understanding with regard to that treaty? Will the Minister give us an assurance that, no matter how the United States tries to interpret the treaty, we will interpret it within the narrow definitions of the treaty?

Mr. Hamilton: All that I can do is refer the hon. Gentleman to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said. Deployment is clearly a matter for negotiation, as we have agreed, and we have received satisfactory assurances from the United States that there will be consultation about any significant change of policy in relation to SDI research.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my hon. Friend agree that, through our co-operation with our American allies on the whole of the programme there is enormous future potential for our allies and our companies here and that it may give us an opportunity to get away from the awful doctrine of mutually assured destruction to something more sane?

Mr. Hamilton: I accept that there are enormous technical advantages to be got out of SDI. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister realised that when she came to an agreement with President Reagan some time ago.

Expenditure

4. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Defence by what percentage expenditure on conventional defence has risen in real terms since 1979.

11. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of expenditure on conventional forces in real terms; and what was the level of expenditure in 1979.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): In the last complete financial year the provision for defence expenditure was 26 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79.

In 1978-79 expenditure on our conventional forces was some £14,400 million at 1986-87 prices. Last year, on the same price basis, and excluding Falklands expenditure, it was some £17,400 million—£3,000 million higher in real terms.

Over the whole period since we have been in office expenditure on our conventional forces, excluding Falklands expenditure, has totalled some £16,000 million more in real terms than would have been the case if expenditure had remained at its 1978-79 level.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an impressive rate of increase and that it fulfills previous manifesto commitments? Will he confirm that that figure would not be greatly altered by any changes in expenditure on Britain's nuclear deterrent?

Mr. Stanley: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. As we have said on many occasions, expenditure on Trident over the lifetime of that programme represents only about 3 per cent. of the defence budget.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Has the Minister taken notice of the ever-increasing evidence which shows that by going ahead with the Trident project our conventional forces have been placed in jeopardy? Indeed, it has been suggested in some quarters that Britain can no longer be properly defended. Is that not the warning that has been given repeatedly over months and years from the Opposition Benches? Would it not appear that the Government's chickens are now coming home to roost?

Mr. Stanley: If the hon. Gentleman heard my original answer he will, I hope, appreciate that our conventional forces are £16,000 million less in jeopardy than they were when his party left office.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Essential to our conventional defence is the ability to produce and maintain certain armaments. My right hon. Friend knows that the Royal Ordnance factory in Nottingham has a unique facility for gun making. Does he not agree that it is essential, in the national interest, that that gun making facility is retained in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Stanley: I am aware of the important defence facility in my hon. Friend's constituency, and I am sure that the quality of that will be taken into account fully by the new management of the establishment.

Mr. Carter-Jones: In spite of the increase in expenditure, is the Minister satisfied that we have sufficient supplies of modern helicopters, modern frigates and modern fighters?

Mr. Stanley: In all those three areas we have made a substantial amount of progress since 1979. Unlike the Labour party, we are maintaining the essential requirement of balance between nuclear and conventional defences.

Mr. Conway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the growth in spending in real terms on conventional forces has led to the development of real jobs in Shrewsbury? Is he further aware that the policies of the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party, as put forward by their Front Bench spokesmen, would lead to the loss of those jobs in Shrewsbury? If Trident were to be cancelled, the cancellation costs would diminish further the conventional budget and lead to further job losses.

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that if the Trident programme were cancelled there would be a serious loss of jobs. As for jobs arising from expenditure on conventional forces, the commitment of the Opposition Front Bench to their long term objective to reduce defence expenditure to the average of the major NATO countries would result in a one third reduction in conventional expenditure by a Labour Government.

Mr. O'Neill: Is the Minister aware that an 86 per cent. increase still masks a decline in our escort fleet from 66 craft in 1980 to 48, as estimated by *Jane's Defence Weekly* next week?

Mr. Stanley: We have had a policy since 1981 of a destroyer and frigate force of about 50. That is still our policy. The capabilities of the destroyer and frigate force today are a quantum jump ahead of what they were at the end of the 1970s.

Trident

5. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the value of contracts already placed in the Trident programme with British firms.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated value of current Trident commitment in the United Kingdom is some £2,250 million out of the total amount committed of about £3 billion.

Mr. Maclean: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. As 62 per cent. of jobs on the Trident programme will be in firms in the United Kingdom, can he estimate how many tens of thousands of jobs would be destroyed and how devastating would be the effect in Cumbria if the Liberal and Labour party policies of one-sided disarmament took effect and Trident were cancelled?

Mr. Hamilton: I confirm that the amount of labour directly employed on the Trident programme will be 7,500 on average and 15,000 at the peak. The amount of indirect labour will be some 6,000 on average and 12,000 at the peak, so a significant number of jobs are involved in this programme.

Mr. Flannery: Do I understand that the Government's policy is to go on producing useless weapons in order to keep people in work? Is that what the Government are saying? Has it ever struck the Government that the British people need all kinds of things besides weapons? If the Government's philosophy is to go on producing these useless weapons and boasting that it keeps people in work, but it has nothing in common with any kind of thoughtful process, why do they not switch to producing those things that are of some use?

Mr. Hamilton: The primary objectives of the Government are to ensure that this country is properly defended and to stop the next war. If we were to have a Europe with no nuclear weapons, it would make it free for conventional war. We have had two world wars so far in Europe and there would be nothing to stop a third. That would be devastating, and it is something that this Government are not prepared to encounter.

Mr. Fallon: The Minister has accepted an invitation from me to visit the Cleveland Bridge Company at Darlington, which has recently completed the fabrication of 150 cradles under subcontract to Vickers for the Trident programme and is looking forward to more work in Faslane and Coulport. Will he explain to the work force what will happen to the work load if Labour comes to power and announces the cancellation of Trident?

Mr. Hamilton: I am happy to come to my hon. Friend's constituency and to explain the devastating effect of many of Labour's policies on jobs, about which Labour Members claim to be so concerned.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not a fact that this country spends a greater percentage of its national wealth on arms than most countries in Western Europe? Is that not why our economic performance in this country has been so poor one of the worst in Western Europe? Will the Minister reflect on the fact that, after eight years, all that the Government's defence and economic policies have produced are the best defended dole queues in Western Europe?

Mr. Hamilton: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the country has been well defended, and, on top of that, the economy is booming.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend agree that a substantial part of the Trident programme is represented by a major civil engineering contract at Coulport in the west of Scotland? Will he take this opportunity to remind the House that every Opposition party is pledged to scrap that programme, with the result that thousands upon thousands of jobs in the west of Scotland would be sacrificed on the altar of their political ideology?

Mr. Hamilton: I agree with my hon. Friend. Some 2,500 jobs are dependent on that programme, and most of them are locally recruited, so its scrapping would have a devastating effect on local employment.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the House will be grateful to him for confirming what the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and the Secretary of State have said that at the moment £3 billion has either been spent or committed—I take committed to mean committed in legally binding contracts—on Trident? As three from nine equals six—*[Interruption.]* I am trying to be helpful to Defence Ministers—that leaves, and I am glad that it is confirmed, £6 billion to be spent on conventional defence if and when the Trident contract is cancelled.

Mr. Hamilton: There is no question of the Trident contract being cancelled, because there is no question of Labour winning the next election. That expenditure is spread over the years until the end of the century, which is a long time.

Procurement Policy

6. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress currently being made between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries on co-operation over defence procurement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Within NATO's conference of national armaments directors good progress is being made, both on projects responding to the Nunn initiative, and on other programmes. In Europe the revitalised Independent European Programme Group is achieving considerable success in the harmonisation of operational requirements and is continuing its efforts to promote greater collaboration in defence research.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Minister accept that joint procurement and co-operation in procurement in Europe is no longer just desirable, but essential, if we are to retain an effective defence industry in Europe? Do the Government support the continued strengthening of the Independent European Programme Group in order to provide the political backing and commitment that that joint co-operation needs?

Mr. Hamilton: The group is getting the backing that it needs from British Ministers. I accept that we cannot afford to embark on many of the development programmes on our own.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Will my hon. Friend confirm, should there be any doubt in anyone's mind, particularly on the Opposition Benches, that the Government's commitment to the Euro-fighter project — the multi-national project—is still as strong as it is ever was, and that any rumours to the contrary, emanating from Opposition spokesmen, should be dismissed as the rubbish that we know them to be?

Mr. Hamilton: It is complete alarmist nonsense. The EFA programme is a stage-by-stage programme and we are planning on the basis of the United Kingdom remaining part of it. We would expect a decision on the launch of that development some time later this year, I hope in the summer.

Mr. Strang: Has the Minister seen the article in *The Independent* yesterday by Mr. Peter Kellner containing allegations that Ministers have deliberately misled Parliament——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not suggest by attribution that Ministers have misled Parliament.

Mr. Strang: On the assumption that the Minister must have read the article, will he address himself to the important question whether there is a NATO decision to modernise short-range nuclear weapons? Is there, or is there not, such a decision?

Mr. Hamilton: I am afraid that I cannot confirm that. I did not read the article and I do not believe everything that I read in the newspapers.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although there is progress on European defence procurement, the progress on the harmonisation of weapons and ammunition has been lamentably slow in NATO? In view of the major contribution that we make to NATO, should not we do a great deal to try to overcome that problem, and will my hon. Friend undertake to see what he can do to try to push that forward?

Mr. Hamilton: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. Harmonisation has improved no end, but there is still much room for improvement. I accept that, and we shall continue with the programme that we have followed in the past.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Parliamentary Under-Secretary give us a precise date for the signing of the development contract for EFA?

Mr. Hamilton: The original date was supposed to be 1 August this year. We are behind schedule, but the signing will occur later on.

Horseshoe Barracks, Shoeburyness

7. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to announce when he expects to have completed his assessment of the future defence role of Horseshoe barracks, Shoeburyness; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): My Department has a continuing long-term requirement for the land used by the Proof and Experimental Establishment, Shoeburyness, lying within the Horseshoe barracks complex to the south of the Chapel road.

For the area of Horseshoe barracks itself which lies to the north of Chapel road we are considering various options. These include its rehabilitation for a military unit, its use as a training camp or its possible sale.

Mr. Taylor: In view of the notable contribution made by Horseshoe barracks and related facilities to the defence requirements of the nation for many years, is my hon. Friend willing to visit Shoeburyness to meet the military personnel and local councillors before a final decision is made on this important issue?

Mr. Freeman: Yes. I am happy to give that assurance to my hon. Friend. If that visit happens after a general election it will be a double pleasure, as I am sure that my hon. Friend will be returned with an increased majority.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How many officers from Shoeburyness, which is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), interviewed Mr. Colin Wallace? Is it not true that there is a memorandum in the Ministry of Defence which says that he may have been framed on a manslaughter charge? Will the Minister deny that that memo exists in his Ministry?

Mr. Freeman: I regret that I am unable to give the hon. Gentleman an answer to his question, because it does not relate directly to the future of Horseshoe barracks, but I shall write to him.

Westland (TV Programme)

8. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will acquire for the library of the Ministry of Defence a video recording of the Granada television programme "World in Action" on the Law Officer's letter in the Westland affair broadcast between 8 and 9 pm on Monday 30 March.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Do Defence Ministers accept that they have some responsibility for the Government's responses and evidence to the Select Committee on Defence? Why, then, did the Cabinet Secretary state to the Select Committee that the Prime Minister had no knowledge of the Law Officer's leak in relation to Westland? If the Granada television programme is inaccurate, do Ministers not think that they ought to call for an apology, if not take Granada to court? If the programme is accurate, has there not been some deception of the Select Committee?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman must accept that this is not a matter for me or for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have nothing to add to the statements made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 and 27 January.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that Granada Television makes some wonderful programmes, including "First Among Equals"? I wonder whether he will consider asking for all Granada's programmes to be placed in the Library for us to view?

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention, because it enables me to tell the House that I was able to see the Granada programme to which the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred, as a result of his question. Indeed, I would not otherwise have seen it.

Arms Sales

9. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review his policy on arms sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The general policy remains unchanged from that of the previous Administration; that is, within the limits of the United Kingdom's political, strategic and security interests, to encourage defence sales and thereby increase the wealth and job opportunities of this country.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister recall that until April 1982 the centre of arms supply to the navy of the Argentine dictator was here, in London? As the Government have now arranged for HMS Glamorgan—along with many other arms—to be supplied to the dictatorship in Chile, which is still involved in murder, torture and the suppression of its people, will the Minister confirm that the Government's loyalty to their friends in the arms trade—the merchants of death—is greater than their respect for human rights?

Mr. Hamilton: The defence industry is a very important industry. Everything should be done to encourage the exports of defence equipment. On the question of selling frigates to Chile, I point out that one cannot involve a frigate in the suppression of the civilian population.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware of the Labour party's commitment, as represented at its conference last year, drastically to reduce arms sales abroad? That will obviously have great implications for jobs and employment opportunities throughout the country, specifically in the west midlands.

Mr. Hamilton: I agree with my hon. Friend. More than 100,000 people are now involved in defence export sales. I am sure that, with an election coming up shortly, they must be extremely worried about their future.

Mr. James Lamond: Is there not something radically wrong with a society, country and Government when the Government boast of increasing defence expenditure during the whole of their tenure in office — unlike expenditure for most of the Departments that they run — claim that employment relies entirely on defence weapons being bought, and now boast that wealth and job opportunities depend on ever-increasing arms sales, mostly to Third world countries where the people are crying out for the supply of things that are much more essential to human life than arms?

Mr. Hamilton: I have never been able to understand the neo-imperialistic attitude of the Opposition which says that we should dictate to Third world countries what they should and should not buy with the resources available to them.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. Friend agree that, if there were the mutually assured destruction of an incoming Labour Government, the consequences of the Labour party winding up the Defence Export Sales Organisation, which made a profit for this country of over £5 billion last year, would be catastrophic for constituencies such as mine?

Mr. Hamilton: The defence manufacturing industry pays great tribute to the Defence Export Services Organisation, which does much to boost our sales abroad.

American Forces

10. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the United States Secretary of State for Defence to discuss the level of American forces in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I next expect to meet the United States Defence Secretary at the spring meeting of NATO's nuclear planning group when a range of Alliance defence issues will be discussed.

Mr. Spencer: Will my right hon. Friend assure the United State Defence Secretary that the Government are firmly committed to nuclear deterrence and that, unlike

the Labour party, we do not expect 300,000 United States troops to put their necks on the line defending us when we are busy shutting their bases and throwing away our nuclear weapons?

Mr. Younger: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that it would be totally disastrous for the defence of the West if anything remotely resembling the policy that the Labour party has adopted on withdrawal of American forces were ever to be undertaken.

Mr. Wareing: When the right hon. Gentleman meets Caspar Weinberger, will he congratulate him on being candid—more candid than the British Government have been so far—in his statement to Congress admitting that 155 mm nuclear shells were now being deployed by NATO? When the right hon. Gentleman returns from that meeting, will he explain to the House why I was misled by a ministerial answer to a written question in 1984 about the Montebello decision, when I was told that there were no such plans to deploy these nuclear weapons with a neutron potentiality?

Mr. Younger: The fact is that no such weapons are deployed in Europe by NATO or by any member of NATO. I think that the hon. Gentleman has had that information. On 24 March my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said to the House:

"as Defence Ministers have made clear . . . no decisions affecting the modefnisation of the theatre nuclear weapons in service with British forces have yet been made."—[*Official Report*, 24 March 1987; Vol. 113, c. 162.]

Defence Export Sales Organisation

12. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Defence in how many countries outside the United Kingdom the Defence Export Sales Organisation has permanent staff based.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Defence Export Services Organisation has permanent staff based in four overseas countries.

Mr. Bowden: In view of the major contribution made by the Defence Export Sales Organisation, does my hon. Friend feel that there is any justification for scrapping it, as has been suggested? Does the organisation represent value for money in terms of what it delivers?

Mr. Hamilton: It represents very good value for money. We expect that last year will prove to be a record for defence export sales. The DESO will have played a key role in achieving that target.

Nuclear Weapons

13. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the implications of his policy of flexible response for the stage at which nuclear weapons are used.

Mr. Stanley: Since the beginning of the year five letters have been received on the general issue of flexible response but I am not aware of any recent representations on the specific aspect referred to by the hon. Member.

Mr. Ross: Will the Minister confirm that there have been representations from NATO that the remaining stockpiles of nuclear weapons should be upgraded, and will he give some indication of when Her Majesty's Government intend to ensure the effectiveness of the remaining stockpile by upgrading those nuclear weapons?

Mr. Stanley: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the decisions take at Montebello. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I dealt with that in detail in our answers on 24 March. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has said, no decisions affecting the modernisation of the theatre nuclear weapons in service with British forces have yet been made.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Adley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Adley: While the Opposition have a vested interest in generating misery, is my right hon. Friend aware that in the real world — certainly in my constituency — investment decisions are now being held up pending the outcome of the general election? Is this not the clearest possible evidence that those who are responsible in our country for creating new jobs and generating prosperity want a continuity of the present Government's economic policies and not a return either to the failed policies of the past or, even worse, new policies to fritter away the gains that have so dearly been won in the last few years?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I believe that overseas investors prefer a Government who believe in free enterprise and sound finance, and who practise both.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the right hon. Lady realise that she will have difficulty explaining why manufacturing investment in this country is 20 per cent. lower than it was in 1979 if all she has to say is that it is being held up pending the general election? In their time in office the Government have increased the tax burden on the nation by 17 per cent. and on the average family by 10 per cent. How could the Prime Minister claim last week that hers is the party that reduces taxation? Is it not obvious from that tax-raising record that she cuts truth, not taxes?

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 the family man on average earnings has had his income tax reduced by £10 per week compared with the tax regime that Labour left. In addition, this Government have got rid of four taxes that were imposed by Labour, and done many other things to reduce taxation.

Mr. Kinnock: Why does the Prime Minister so often seek to obscure the truth—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister promised that taxes must and would be cut when she was first elected. The Prime Minister has presided over an 87 per cent. increase in VAT, a 50 per cent. increase in national insurance contributions, and higher rates and charges, which together mean that that average man with that average family is meeting a tax burden that is 10 per cent. higher

under her Government than under any previous peacetime Government. Does she not realise that it is the total tax that is important to the average family, not merely income tax—or does she not know anything about the average family?

The Prime Minister: Why did the right hon. Gentleman vote against cutting income tax?

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister knows very well that there were choices. With the £3 billion from the 2p tax change the best that could be expected was an extra 80,000 jobs. With that £3 billion targeted on manufacturing, construction and vital services, 300,000 jobs could have been created in Britain. Does the Prime Minister not think that that would have been better value for money, better value for people and better value for Britain?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman never says how many jobs would be lost by taking away the money from the people who would have invested it. He wants to talk about losing jobs. Look at his programme on defence, look at his programme on nuclear energy, and look at his programme for minimum wages.

Mr. St. John-Stevas *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not called the right hon. Gentleman before on Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. St. John-Stevas: With regard to certain speculation that has appeared in the press about the date of the general election, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that in exercising her constitutional duty of tendering advice she will be guided not by the ephemera of the opinion polls but by the best interests of the country?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Steel: During the past fortnight the Government have abandoned the search for sites for nuclear waste on land, announced 82 major road works programmes, given nurses their full pay award and now announced the saving of rural schools. In view of all these deathbed conversions, may we have a general election every year?

The Prime Minister: I seem to remember the right hon. Gentleman holding things up by virtue of the Lib-Lab pact.

Mr. Silvester: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a movement has erupted in Manchester composed of all parties—Labour, Conservative and alliance—against a 20 per cent. increase in the rates and the mortgaging of their future, and that this petition is a cry for help from the people of Manchester to the people outside it? Will she find time today to give it her support?

The Prime Minister: I hope, with my hon. Friend, that people will remember when they vote on Thursday that Labour authorities mean high rates, which mean fewer jobs and a great penalty on domestic rates.

Q2. **Mr. Stott** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stott: Can the Prime Minister explain why a nurse sharing a room in Westminster will have to pay the same amount of poll tax as a millionaire living in Park Lane, and why my constituents will have to find an additional £60 a year in Wigan while she will save £37 per week when she retires to Dulwich?

The Prime Minister: I think that what the hon. Gentleman is saying is that one will pay a good deal less poll tax if one lives in a good Tory authority area than if one lives in a Labour authority area. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I detect the euphoria which I heard about a moment ago.

Q3. **Mr. Lord** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lord: Will the Prime Minister acknowledge the invaluable role played by village schools in rural communities such as central Suffolk, and will she confirm —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May we have less euphoria and more attention?

Mr. Lord: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that no strict criteria are laid down—financial or otherwise—for the closure of such schools and that the decision to close schools will be determined entirely on the ground of whether they are educationally satisfactory?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science recognises the wide support for village schools in the rural community. I understand that an answer will be given later this afternoon.

Mr. Foot: Will the Prime Minister undertake to circulate copies of the parable of the unjust steward to any Cabinet member who has not yet acted upon it?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the ingenuity of his question.

Q4. **Sir John Farr** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Farr: Is my right hon. Friend aware that next week, for the first time, no fewer than 200 licensed conveyancers will take up their jobs? Is that not first-class news for home buyers and all those on the domestic front? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government are to be congratulated on giving this opportunity to buyers in what was formerly a very restricted market?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The powers in the Administration of Justice Act 1985 on licensed conveyancers come into effect on 11 May. Those powers will be generally welcomed by all house buyers and by both sides of the House. They will introduce more competition into conveyancing and that competition is already helping to reduce costs and secure better value for money.

Q5. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Prime Minister take the opportunity today to tell the House whether the statement

made by General Rogers to a Congressional Committee that a decision was taken to deploy nuclear weapons before the last general election is true, or a lie?

The Prime Minister: I am not responsible for the comments made by General Rogers. I know of no such allegations.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my right hon. Friend have time today to fit in a message of congratulations for the six newly elected Conservative councillors returned on Thursday with an increased share of the poll, and in particular for the victor in Devon, who succeeded with a 22 per cent. swing from the alliance to the Conservatives?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I gladly congratulate those councillors. I hope that the result augurs well for later in the week.

Q6. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McWilliam: Will the Prime Minister comment on the assertion in Sunday's *Observer* that she was the ultimate beneficiary of treachery and subversion?

The Prime Minister: I do not comment on newspaper reports.

Q7. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hickmet: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most parents are appalled by the promotion of gay rights or lesbian rights, so-called peace studies in our schools and some of the more dangerous loony Left policies in places such as Brent? Is not the Government's suggestion that schools should be given more independence the only way to keep people such as Mr. Lawrence Norcross of Highbury Grove in place and in good heart? Should not those rights be given sooner rather than later?

The Prime Minister: Mr. Norcross was a highly respected and regarded head teacher who gave the children in his care an excellent education. The fact of, and the reasons for, his retirement will cause concern in the minds of many parents and underline the wisdom of Conservative policy to give more powers to head teachers and parents over the future of their schools.

Q8. **Mr. Freud** asked the Prime Minister of she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Freud: Does the Prime Minister accept that over the years artists have done significantly more for the well-being of nations than have politicians? Will she try to be a little more understanding about the problems of the arts, and especially those of Kent Opera?

The Prime Minister: This Government have increased, in real terms, the budget given to the arts, because we have great respect for the services that they provide and for the way in which they enrich the life of the nation. However, I do not entirely accept the hon. Gentleman's initial premise.

Civil Service Pay Dispute

3.30 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Minister for Social Security what arrangements he is making for the provision of assistance to families with urgent financial needs, who were denied the payment of benefit during the civil servants' dispute; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. John Major): This is a pay dispute which extends across the Civil Service, although the two unions taking action have chosen to target local offices of my Department and of the Department of Employment. We are now in the fifth week of a rolling programme of strikes, which this week will affect the public in London and the south-east.

The situation for those who will not receive on time giro-cheques due this week will be broadly the same as for Scotland over the Easter period. If claimants cannot manage to tide themselves over the few days until their girocheque arrives, they may be able to obtain help from their local authority.

This falls far short of the standard of service that we wish claimants to receive and I greatly regret the fact that the two unions have chosen to further their pay campaign in a fashion which is bound to hurt the most vulnerable members of society.

I must make it clear that the Government believe that the Civil Service pay offer is a fair one. For the second year running, it is above the rate of inflation and will give many civil servants increases of between 5 and 6 per cent. Three Civil Service unions have accepted the Government's offer. The Society of Civil and Public Servants and the Civil and Public Services Association should do the same.

Mr. Taylor: Is my hon. Friend aware of the acute hardship that will be suffered by many low-income families and benefit recipients if this regrettable dispute continues and escalates? Will he take some emergency measures in co-operation with local authority social service departments to ensure that deprivation is avoided wherever possible? As the employing Minister, will he convey to the Treasury the special problems of recruitment in areas such as the south-east, where costs are high and competitive wages and fringe benefits in the private sector are much higher? Does he agree that our civil servants, whose general standards of service are higher than those in other competitive nations, merit at least a proper review of salaries comparable to that recently given to teachers and nurses?

Mr. Major: As I stated in my answer, approaches have already been made to local office managers and to local authorities to provide, in cases of hardship, emergency help under the standing contingency arrangements that apply in all our local offices. Experience in other parts of the country has been that services are quickly restored to normal after the strike, with urgent cases being given the highest priority.

On my hon. Friend's second point, we have made it clear to all the unions, including the CPSA and the Society of Civil and Public Servants, that the Treasury is entirely ready to talk to them about a flexible pay system similar to that recently concluded with the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. As my hon. Friend may know, that agreement includes a framework for settling pay, based firmly on the recommendations of the independent Megaw report of 1982.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Minister aware that to avoid industrial disputes in social security offices, which all of us wish to avoid, it is incumbent on the Government to provide decent working conditions and fair pay? Is he aware that the working conditions are Dickensian and the pay is at poverty level? Is he aware that the workload per person has increased by 30 per cent. while at the same time pay has decreased by 30 per cent. relative to comparable workers, such as bank clerks? Is he aware that one third of social security staff earn less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold and that 40,000 staff have pay so low that they are entitled to means-tested benefits? Is he aware that conditions are so bad that staff turnover nationally is 70 per cent. and that in London it is over 100 per cent. per year?

Is the Minister aware that against that background the Government's offer of 4·5 per cent. is no answer for staff who are grossly overworked, undertrained, undervalued and underpaid and whose morale has hit an all-time low? Until a proper pay offer is made which is not 50 per cent. below the current going rate, what emergency payments will the Government make under section 1 to protect claimants, especially families, who are the innocent victims of this dispute, who in many areas support it, and who are currently penalised by the Government's meanness?

Mr. Major: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman precisely of what I am aware. I am aware that this is a fair pay offer which will provide a minimum increase of £5·75 a week for everybody over the age of 17; that many civil servants will receive between 5 and 6 per cent.; that they will also get improved leave arrangements; and that this is the second successive year in which the pay award is well in excess of inflation. I am aware and surprised that the hon. Gentleman and many of the unions concerned seem to oppose many of the computerisation improvements which will lead to better working conditions and a better service to the public. I am also aware—I hope that the hon. Gentleman is, too, because he did not mention this—that it is unreasonable for those with secure jobs to threaten the interests of those with no jobs.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Is my hon. Friend aware that most people will see it as the height of cynicism for any trade union leader to pretend that we can get a better Civil Service by holding the most needy to ransom?

Mr. Major: I entirely accept my hon. Friend's point. The majority of civil servants have high standards and offer a good service. We wish to reward them for that with a fair pay offer, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Minister, as a useful backdrop to this sad dispute, provide figures showing the increase in the number of social security claimants since 1979 compared with the increase in staff to administer that system? Will he concede that a comparison of those proportions shows that the terrible scenes, particularly those which we witnessed in Glasgow over Easter, and the dispute could have been avoided if the Government had been more sympathetic to the position of social security staff? Does the Minister agree that the voluntary sector is having to make a major

contribution because, clearly, local authority input, which the Government expect, is curtailed because of the constraints imposed by central Government on its budget?

Mr. Major: It is precisely because we are concerned about the interests of both claimants and staff that we have sought to introduce a far simpler social security system in the Social Security Act 1986, much of which the hon. Gentleman's party objected to and voted against during its passage through the House. The hon. Gentleman may well be aware that we have substantially increased the staffing level in the past 12 months and that we are seeking to introduce a computerisation system which will make life much more efficient for both claimants and the staff working the system.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is it the Government's view that the present pay offer is sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate the civil servants to whom the pay offer has been made?

Mr. Major: For the second successive year the pay offer exceeds inflation and on that basis it is fair and will achieve the objectives that my hon. Friend sets out.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Minister aware that many of my constituents work at the Livingston centre in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and naturally come to my hon. Friend and me? Will the hon. Gentleman answer a factual question? How many employees at the Livingston centre claim benefit? The Minister has been pressed for figures on that. Some of us suspect that it is one-fifth or one-sixth of the workforce. Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how many staff are claiming benefit?

Mr. Major: I have no reason whatsoever to suppose that the figures quoted by the hon. Gentleman are accurate, but I will investigate them and let him know.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not this latest example of the abuse of trade union power—which is used to harm some of the weakest people in our society and which has the support of the Opposition Members—a cogent reminder of the importance of returning a Conservative Government?

Mr. Major: On the latter point, the electorate will make their own decision at some future stage. On the substantive point, I must repeat that this is a fair offer, it is one that the trade unions should accept, and it is unreasonable of them to target their action on a section of the community that cannot otherwise be defended.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Will the Minister acknowledge the Government's responsibility in bringing about this dispute? Is it not the result of eight years of attacks on the value of the services that are performed by the Civil Service, particularly in the DHSS offices? Is it not the case that under-staffing has been allowed to continue and that working conditions have deteriorated? Is it not the Government's responsibility, because they dismantled the pay research unit in 1980, thus leaving civil servants with no proper means of arbitration and is it not that which is now required to bring this dispute to an end?

Mr. Major: I think that the hon. Member is wrong on many of the points that she has made. Over the past 12 months staff levels have been increased substantially and, for the second year, the pay offer is above inflation and the system has been simplified.

Mr. Meacher: So the Minister keeps saying.

Mr. Major: I will continue to say it because the country needs to know it.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Leicester DHSS offices are in the hands of militants? The leader of the CPSA in Leicester, Mr. Tony Church, took great delight in announcing on the radio that my constituents would suffer and that it did not matter that new claimants would not receive their money for a while. Is he aware that no ballot has been taken, yet the CPSA is taking action starting on Monday 11 May? Does the Minister agree that that is callous and greedy and that it shows no care, love or understanding for those who are desperately in need and that the union is merely a servant of the Labour party?

Mr. Major: I had no knowledge of the circumstances in Leicester. My hon. Friend speaks most forcefully for his constituents. In my judgment, the vast majority of civil servants, even though they may be caught up in this dispute, carry out their jobs in a wholly non-partisan and effective way. I want them to accept this fair offer and return to providing the service that the Government, and the majority of them want them to provide.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): Does the Minister accept the figures quoted by the two unions involved that some 40,000 members are in receipt of social security benefits? Is that not why in some local offices—and they are not all Militant-controlled — the vote, taken on a democratic basis, was, perhaps sad to say, overwhelmingly in support of industrial action?

Mr. Major: I am not sure whether the figures quoted will include the universal child benefit payment. I have not seen the breakdown of the figures quoted by the union leaders. If the circumstances are as the hon. Gentleman has suggested, surely it would be sensible to accept the offer, which is substantially above the rate of inflation?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Minister aware that his crocodile tears for the claimants will not fool anyone outside the House and very few people in it? The cause of the dispute is the disgraceful pay of many civil servants, who do a good job trying to deal with the most appalling social problems that have been created by the Government. The culprits in this dispute is the Minister and the Government who have paid insufficiently high benefits and have maintained very low wages and provided disgraceful working conditions for hard-working civil servants.

Mr. Major: In no sense was I seeking to cry crocodile tears, but in no way does the hon. Gentleman condemn the action that hurts many people who have no jobs and who will lose their social security benefits this week. Why does not the hon. Gentleman condemn that?

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not a fact that the Government are once again blackmailing an orderly and well-behaved section of the community, as they did with the nurses and the teachers? Have not the Government driven these people to desperation because they knew that they would not take action as they wanted to look after those whom their jobs entailed them looking after? Are not these people turning because they are desperate? Does the Minister take pride in doing this to these well-behaved people? Is it not obscene that a wealthy

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

lawyer, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who is mostly out of the Chamber and in court making money hand over fist, should attack these poor people? Tory Members, especially the hon. and learned Member, should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. Major: The answer to most of the questions asked by the hon. Gentleman is no. I reiterate that the Government are seeking, have been seeking, and will continue to seek a fair settlement, and we believe that one is on offer.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard for the rest of the business on the Order Paper. This is an extension of Question Time.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I will take points of order at the end.

State Security

3.45 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the implications for the conduct of Her Majesty's Government's legal action in the Australian courts as a result of the publication in newspapers in the United States of details from Mr Peter Wright's book regarding the security services."

On Sunday the *Washington Post* published an account of extracts from the Wright book. Thus Americans can read in their country information about what occurred here arising from activities of the British security services which British citizens cannot read in their own country because of the legal action taken in Australia and other action, to which apparently I am not allowed to refer.

The piece which appeared in the *Washington Post* has been syndicated throughout the United States and Canada to some 400 other papers and journals. The story which was published in the *Washington Post* dealt as well with the alleged plot by a number of MI5 officials to undermine the Government of the day. But prior to that Government being elected in 1974 the article quoted Mr. Wright as saying:

"The plan was simple. In the run-up to the election . . . MI5 would arrange for details of the intelligence about leading Labour Party figures, but especially Wilson, to be leaked to sympathetic press men . . . word of the material contained in MI5 files, and the fact that Wilson was considered a security risk, would be passed around."

These are the most serious allegations that could be made against officials who are meant to be politically neutral. There are very serious allegations regarding the fact that Mr. Wright believes that MI5 was involved after the election in undermining an elected Government. What, then, about the definition of subversion which states that those who undermine parliamentary democracy are a security risk. The very people involved in the security services were apparently doing their best to undermine parliamentary democracy.

I believe that this is a matter which should receive urgent consideration. Surely it is totally unsatisfactory for all these matters to be aired in the United States press when this House is denied the opportunity to discuss issues which go right to the heart of our system of parliamentary democracy. I believe that it is necessary for a debate to take place. The excuses of former officials that we have read in the British press to justify their actions of 10 years ago to try to undermine and subvert a British Government are most flimsy. For all those reasons, I believe that a debate is absolutely essential.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the implications for the conduct of Her Majesty's Government's legal action in the Australian courts as a result of the publication in newspapers in the United States of details of Mr. Peter Wright's book regarding the security services."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that

he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No point of order arises.

Peek Frean Factory, Bermondsey

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to ask leave to move the Ajournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement last Friday afternoon of the closure of Peek Frean's factory in my constituency of Bermondsey with the loss of more than 1,000 jobs."

The matter is specific for obvious reasons: on Labour Day, above all days, the closure of a firm with a long and respected history was announced. That firm is also the largest private sectqr employer in north Southwark. The matter is important because Peek Frean is a firm that is owned by Nabisco, which is run from the United States, but it is none the less known throughout Britain for its production of biscuits, crackers, crisps and Christmas puddings, which, no doubt, most hon. Members have relied on every festive season in the past. It is the last of the series of large manufacturers in the food and drink industry left in a part of London that relied on that industry for its jobs.

The matter is urgent because of the sheer statistics involved in the closure of a plant of this size—more than 1,000 jobs will be lost, most of which belong to women. That adds to an unemployment number of more than 7,000 in my constituency alone. The overall unemployment rate is 22 per cent.—29 per cent. of males and 14 per cent. of females. That puts the constituency in the top 25 constituencies for unemployment in the whole of England.

The unions will be meeting this week and have, I gather, only a few days in which to accept the terms by which the whole work force will be laid off. I ask that the matter be debated, not only for the sake of the workers there, but so that the future of manufacturing industry in the inner cities can be debated in the House as a matter of great importance.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement of the closure of Peek Frean's Nabisco factory in Bermondsey and the loss of more than 1,000 jobs, the majority of whose holders live in the hon. Gentleman's constituency."

Again, I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not had a point of order yet. I shall take one now.

Early-day Motion 931

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to early-day motion 931, which states:

That this House notes that the names Brooks, De Wesselow, Otley, Fletcher and Gordon have been identified as conspirators in the treasonable plot to bring about the downfall of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, Prime Minister between February and October 1974; and further demands a statement from the Prime Minister as to what disciplinary action was taken against them when they were identified to Sir Michael Hanley, Directer General of M.I.5 in 1975.

Is it in order, Mr. Speaker, to use the Order Paper to indict individuals with substantive and serious offences of treason? Do not we bring the House into disrespect if we adopt procedures that we would never have considered appropriate if adopted in courts elsewhere? Is it not particularly oppressive in this instance, as those so indicted are almost certainly bound by the Official Secrets Act and are therefore unable to speak in their own defence? Such individuals have given signal service to the country—for example, Anthony Brooks won the Military Cross and the Distinguished Service Order for action behind enemy lines, and was also awarded the Legion of Honour and the Croix de Guerre with palms for action behind enemy lines. Is it not a matter of deep regret that such men, without a shadow or scintilla of evidence against them, should find themselves indicted in this, the highest court in the land, and do not we bring ourselves into disrepute by these actions?

Mr. Speaker: My responsibility is to consider whether early-day motions are in order. Those which may not be are brought to my attention. This early-day motion was not brought to my attention, so it is in order. I say to the whole House that we should use our parliamentary privileges with the greatest discretion and care, because under the privileges that we enjoy we can name and accuse those outside who have no recourse.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask for your advice? With the exception of yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of the House, I am one of a small and dwindling band of MPs who were here when Hugh Gaitskell was Leader of the Opposition. I say this in the presence of a former Home Secretary who was Hugh Gaitskell's constituency successor in Leeds. I am not in any way questioning your judgment about your answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), but the fact remains that in the *Washington Post* statements have been made about the death of Hugh Gaitskell that cannot go without comment. The *Washington Post* says:

"It was also during this period that MI5, spurred in part by the Angleton report, began to investigate Wilson. Wright says his own suspicions had begun with the mysterious death in 1963—"

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not read out the letter. I think that many of us have read this.

Mr. Dalyell: It is a very serious allegation and I should like to be very precise. It goes on:

"—of Labor Party leader—"

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to do that. I am aware that he also submitted an application under Standing Order No. 20 in broadly the same terms as the application that I have just heard from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to make a second application under the cloak of a point of order. I fully appreciate the importance of this matter to the House, but my only discretion in these matters is whether they meet the criteria laid down for Standing Order No. 20. That is the total of my discretion. There are many other ways in which these matters can be brought before the House.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask for guidance about how the memory of Hugh Gaitskell and these very serious allegations against his successor as Labour leader can be debated if all this is sub judice? The implication is that a Labour leader was the beneficiary of the possible assassination of a previous Labour leader. Ought there not to be a Government statement? Government statements are coming in *The Times* today under the cloak of Mr. Chapman Pincher's article.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Whether there should be a Government statement is a matter for discussion between the usual channels and the Government. It is not a matter of order for me.

Mr. Dalyell: Could I appeal to the Leader of the House for some kind of statement from the Government? We cannot have 400 news media throughout the western world carrying all these allegations about the possible assassination of a former Labour leader, the former Member for Leeds, South (Mr. Gaitskell) and have absolutely no comment about it. It is deeply unsatisfactory that the Downing street view should be put in an article in *The Times* under the name of a particular journalist, in this case Chapman Pincher——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had a good run on it.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you help the House and especially Opposition Members by confirming that, if it is the view of a major part of the opposition parties and certainly if it is the view of the usual channels, the Opposition are free to use Opposition days which still exist in this Parliament? Parliament still continues and Opposition days still roll round. Can you confirm that, if it is the view of sufficient Opposition Members who give the matter sufficient weight, and not just the view of some eccentrics who want to peddle this for their own purposes, they are perfectly free to bring these matters to the House? In so far as that is allowed by you, Mr. Speaker, and by sub judice rules they can give the matter a proper airing in the guise of an Opposition day debate.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that there are other opportunities and the House must use them to do what the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for what you have just said. Is the import of what you have just said that one can forget the fact that there is a sub judice aspect about a book, and that if the information is raised elsewhere it does not prevent us from raising and debating this matter on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Speaker: I made a careful statement about this last week and I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to that.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same matter?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No, it is not on the same matter. You will know that last Friday I tabled an early-day motion, about which the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) has spoken, and in which five persons were named. My point of order is about the principle of naming persons on the Order Paper. On 28 January I asked a question of the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry——

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am coming to it, Mr. Speaker. I asked him about a licensed security dealer who I refused to name on the Floor of the House. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that Conservative Members nodded in support of the principle of me not naming that security dealer. I said at the time that I was worried that many people would lose money that they had invested in the company.

Last Friday, the Department of Trade and Industry revoked the licence of the company and on Sunday it was made clear that it would be applying for a winding up order. If I had named the company on that day — against my better judgment I gave in to pressures in this House not to name the company — many people, perhaps several thousand, would be today hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of pounds better off. I refused to name the company and investors in IDB lost money.

I hope it is a lesson to the House that there are times in this Chamber when one has to name an individual or company because it is in the public interest to do so. On that occasion, by not naming the company, I failed.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that a point of order arises out of that, but I cannot recollect a time when an early-day motion submitted by the hon. Member has been drawn to my attention for my adjudication.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Race Relations (Offshore Employment) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay (Offshore Employment) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Meat and Livestock Commission Levy Scheme (Confirmation) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. — *[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Parliamentary Elections (Compulsory Voting and Public Holiday) Bill

4.2 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make voting at Parliamentary Elections compulsory and to establish a public holiday in the area for any Parliamentary election.

I realise that it is rather late to be introducing new Bills into what has now become a Parliament of the politically undead, but it is certainly an appropriate time to raise this issue. Within a week or so we will all be involved in a general election campaign which will culminate on a polling day when, if we are lucky, about 75 per cent. of the electorate will vote. I remind hon. Members that in 1983 only 72·7 per cent. of the electorate voted. For a variety of reasons, one in four, 25 per cent. or 10 million of our citizens are likely not to record a vote at the coming general election. Many will have good reasons for that. Some people, such as those who are homeless, in hostels or in bed and breakfast accommodation, effectively have been disfranchised by Government policies. A significant number will deliberately abstain. But I believe that the great majority who fail to vote do so out of sheer apathy.

It was once said of Stanley Baldwin during an election campaign that he went around the country whipping up apathy. Perhaps that was so, but it is facile and misleading to blame politicians and political parties for low turnouts at elections. Representative parliamentary democracy does not exist to serve political parties and politicians. Equally, electors do not do political parties a favour by voting. Voting is not a favour to confer; it is, or should be, a duty to be exercised by all of us.

Our system of parliamentary democracy has been achieved through struggle and still remains a guardian of our liberties. But in turn, as a system, it needs constant nurturing and protection, particularly against those who would seek to undermine and ultimately destroy it. There was the example from my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) of the conspiracies within the British establishment to undermine a democratically elected Labour Government.

Our parliamentary system is imperfect. It is still too easily manipulated. At this moment the entire country is waiting for one person, whose party enjoys an overall parliamentary majority of 138 Members elected by 42·4 per cent. of those who voted, or 30·8 per cent. of those eligible to vote, in 1983, to decide when will be the best moment for her to call a general election.

In February this year I introduced a Bill to ensure fixed-term parliaments, which would have meant everybody now knowing when the election will be held. With the Government's majority, that should not be until June 1988. The power of the Prime Minister alone to determine the date of the election and the constant and futile speculation in the press over it is bad for democracy. But equally bad for democracy is having a Government with a massive majority elected by about only 31 per cent. of the electorate. Those 10 million or so people who failed to vote in 1983 have a great deal to answer for to those of us who did vote.

If a Government are going to be genuinely representative and speak with genuine authority, they

[Mr. Tony Banks]

must be the product of a system which maximises their claim to govern. If a system is considered stronger because a greater percentage of the electorate voted, we should aim to achieve the closest we can get to a 100 per cent. turn out. If the act of voting is considered essential to the health of parliamentary democracy, it is too important to be left as an option for individuals.

Already we consider certain activities in our society too important for the common good to be left as options. We cannot legitimately opt out of paying taxes, national insurance or rates, or opt out of being educated, however hard Government Members have tried. We pass laws which have to be obeyed, on pain of certain penalties. The authority for all that is parliamentary government, yet the act of electing, through the ballot box, that Government is still a permissive rather than a mandatory activity.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): That is freedom.

Mr. Banks: The Minister talks about freedom. I do not think that Australia, Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg and Italy, where voting is compulsory, are countries that are not free. But in all those countries the turnout is appreciably greater than in the United Kingdom. In most cases, it averages over 90 per cent. Therefore, the compulsory voting provision in the Bill will lead to a dramatic increase in the turnout at our general elections.

The second part of my Bill would allow for a public holiday on polling day. This is the slight sweetener because of the compulsory voting provision. We seem to positively delight in making our electoral practices as difficult as possible for people. We vote on a Thursday, a normal working day, which is a tradition that goes back only to 1935. In all those countries where voting is compulsory, they have rest day voting on Saturdays or Sundays. In many other countries where rest day voting is the normal practice, with the exception of Japan and Switzerland, the percentage turnout is again significantly greater than that in the United Kingdom.

Democracy is not strengthened by putting obstacles in the way. Voting on a working day is an obstacle that should be removed. We should perhaps keep Thursday, because any proposal for weekend voting would produce a host of objections from a wide variety of religious groups. But at least we can make general election day a holiday.

If voting is compulsory, there will have to be some penalty for failing to vote. For those without a legitimate reason, a fine of about £50 would seem appropriate. However, this is mere detail. I am concerned today with principles only. Those who wish to go into the polling booths and write something discourteous about the Prime Minister or about the Labour party candidate for Newham, North-West, would still be at liberty to do so. Provided that their ballot paper ends up in the ballot box, there are any number of unpleasant things that the disenchanted may choose to do, but at least they will have been required to make the effort.

The way in which we operate the mechanics of our electoral practice is not beyond change. Changes are badly needed. I believe that we need fixed-term Parliaments and a more equitable way in which the national vote is translated into parliamentary seats. I believe that that means a system of proportional representation. My Bill would be a useful contribution to the process of change, which is necessary to keep our democracy healthy. The consequences of an election are far too important for all of us to allow any of us to opt out without good rreason. That being so, I ask the House to accept the Bill.

4.11 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman seek to oppose?

Mr. Simon Hughes: Yes.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for introducing this important subject. However, at some stages during his speech I wondered whether he was introducing a new form of community service with just a little idea that it might be needed ultimately for his own party's political rescue.

There are several issues on which, I hope, there is no disagreement among those who are progressive thinkers, as opposed to stale thinkers. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said, it is ridiculous to have the Prime Minister of the day deciding at which moment she should choose to go to the country. That is something upon which the hon. Gentleman was given leave to introduce a Bill a short time ago. It was supported not just by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West but has been supported by the Lord Chancellor and others over many years.

We would agree with the hon. Gentleman's proposition that the current system is clearly unfair. I think that he revealed that the tide is moving, in his party as in others, towards recognition of the fact that in at least a three-party democracy——

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Four-party.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I said "at least" three.

In such a democracy one cannot sustain a system that is so open to distortion if the parties have about one third of the votes each. However, the hon. Gentleman is wrong in the remedy. He chooses the old Labour party remedy of compulsion—if people do not do something freely, consider compulsion. That is certainly worth considering. The hon. Gentleman made the point that five countries have chosen that route, but there are other much more likely remedies that may produce the right result.

The civic duty to vote is, like many other civic and moral duties, imposed upon us with the right to opt out. The number of people who opt out reflects the commitment of people and their belief as to how well they are served by the current system. The hon. Gentleman should realise that the quicker and better remedy, which the Government have long refused to acknowledge, is that we should have a fair electoral system.

We have to have a system that gives everybody a chance to exercise a vote that will have an equal influence upon the result. When the votes that people cast have a different result in the House from what the country has said through the ballot box, genuine representativeness and belief in a majority government will not be achieved. The hon. Gentleman, calling for a Government who represent the majority view, should realise that it was the current electoral sytem that prevented that being achieved in 1979, 1983 and all the other elections since the war. That can be distorted even more when the party with the largest number of votes does not get the largest number of seats.

The figures are well known. I choose those of my own party and my colleagues because at the moment they are the most extreme. However, that need not necessarily always be the case. It is ludicrous for people to pretend that we are in a democracy when, with 25·5 per cent. of the votes, which is what alliance candidates got in 1983, it achieved 3·5 per cent. of the seats. It is ludicrous that in 1983 in London, Conservative candidates got 44 per cent. of the votes and 56 seats, Labour candidates got 30 per cent. of the votes and 26 seats and that only my splendid colleague the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) was left to represent our alliance colleagues in London, although the alliance got 25 per cent. of the votes.

Is it surprising that a recent British Youth Council survey showed that only 34 per cent. of people between the ages of 18 and 25 said that they would vote for any party at the coming general election? Two thirds of our young people say that they will not vote at all. Is it surprising that at by-elections such as that in Peckham, which adjoins my constituency, when the present hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) was elected in the autumn of 1982, only 38 per cent. of the electorate voted? That happens because of massive disillusionment with the system and with our achievement.

It may well be worth considering having a holiday. I am not against having a holiday for voting on a Thursday or any other day. I do not know whether that would increase the number of people who chose to vote as opposed to those who chose to go in the other direction from the polling booths—such as to the seaside or other places. I am happy to have elections on a Thursday. Probably about one in every seven of us was born on a Thursday. There are other good reasons for choosing a day that does not conflict with any likely religious festival. However, to suggest that we should penalise with a £50 fine those who do not turn up to vote smacks of the ridiculous. The likelihood of achieving anything other than providing a bit more money for distribution through the usual channels to political parties does not seem to be a good reason for adding a fine to the penalty.

We should change the voting system first. Let us see how many people would vote in a fair voting system. If, after several attempts with a system that reflects the view of the country fairly, people do not respond by voting in massively increased numbers, let us consider making it compulsory. Not voting now reflects people's view that we have neither a fair system nor one that reflects their wishes properly in the House. I ask the House to reject the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and Nominations of Select Committees at Commencement of Public Business):—

The House divided: Ayes 41, Noes 24.

Division No. 151] **[4.15 pm**

AYES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dixon, Donald
Eadie, Alex
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Lamond, James
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCartney, Hugh
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
O'Neill, Martin
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Whitfield, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kevin Barron and
Mr. Ernie Ross.

NOES

Alton, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Beith, A. J.
Benyon, William
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Cartwright, John
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Gower, Sir Raymond
Harris, David
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Maclennan, Robert
Meadowcroft, Michael
Proctor, K. Harvey
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Speller, Tony
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Taylor, Matthew
Wainwright, R.

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Clement Freud.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Ernie Ross and Mr. Kevin Barron.

Parliamentary Elections (Compulsory Voting and Public Holiday)

Mr. Tony Banks accordingly presented a Bill to make voting at Parliamentary Elections compulsory and to establish a public holiday in the area for any Parliamentary election: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 11 June and to be printed. [Bill 148.]

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it should be recorded that the House has just introduced a Bill which seeks to introduce compulsory voting, because only approximately 72·3 per cent. of the electorate turn out to vote at a general election; yet the Bill has been passed with only 20 per cent. of the vote, so that the Labour party has proved the point.

Mr. Speaker: The House has decided whether leave should be given to bring in the Bill. It has not been passed as such.

Orders of the Day

Chevening Estate Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Clauses 1 to 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5

SHORT TITLE, CITATION AND COMMENCEMENT

4.30 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, leave out lines 43 to 46.

It might be helpful to the House if I explain the background to the amendment.

It is the privilege of the House of Commons to control charges on public funds. To avoid infringing this privilege, the Lords formally negative any provisions of a Bill starting in their House which involve such a charge. The so-called privilege amendment is printed in the Bill with a black line in the margin, and the leaving out of the relevant subsection must be moved as an amendment during Committee stage in the Commons. In accordance with recent practice, notice has been given of this amendment which, having been moved formally, should be agreed.

The amendment is designed purely to delete the privilege amendment made in another place.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I thank the Leader of the House for that explanation, which it is advantageous to have on record. As this is clearly the latest in a long list of blatant vote-grabbing measures that the Government are bringing forward, the Opposition do not see it as in their interests to prolong the proceedings. I hope that those will be my final words on the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair.*]

New Clause 7

SERVICE CHARGE CONTRIBUTION TO BE HELD IN TRUST

'(1) This section applies where the tenants of two or more dwellings may be required under the terms of their leases to contribute to the same costs by the payment of service charges; and in this section—

"the contributing tenants" means those tenants;

"the payee" means the landlord or other person to whom any such charges are payable by those tenants under the terms of their leases;

"relevant service charges" means any such charges;

"service charge" has the meaning given by section 18(1) of the 1985 Act, except that it does not include a service charge payable by the tenant of a dwelling the rent of which is registered under Part IV of the Rent Act 1977, unless the amount registered is, in pursuance of section 7(4) of that Act, entered as a variable amount;

"tenant" does not include a tenant of an exempt landlord; and

"trust fund" means the fund, or (as the case may be) any of the funds, mentioned in subsection (2) below.

(2) Any sums paid to the payee by the contribution tenants by way of relevant service charges, and any investments representing those sums, shall (together with any income accruing thereon) be held by the payee either as a single fund or, if he thinks fit, in two or more separate funds.

(3) The payee shall hold any trust fund—

(a) on trust to defray costs incurred in connection with the matters for which the relevant service charges were payable (whether incurred by himself or by any other person), and

(b) subject to that, on trust for the persons who are the contributing tenants for the time being.

(4) Subject to subsections (6) to (8), the contributing tenants shall be treated as entitled by virtue of subsection (3) *(b)* to such shares in the residue of any such fund as are proportionate to their respective liabilities to pay relevant service charges.

(5) If the Secretary of State by order so provides, any sums standing to the credit of any trust fund may, instead of being invested in any other manner authorised by law, be invested in such manner as may be specified in the order; and any such order may contain such incidental, supplemental or transitional provisions as the Secretary of State considers appropriate in connection with the order.

(6) On the termination of the lease of a contributing tenant the tenant shall not be entitled to any part of any trust fund, and (except where subsection (7) applies) any part of any such fund which is attributable to relevant service charges paid under the lease shall accordingly continue to be held on the trusts referred to in subsection (3).

(7) If after the termination of any such lease there are no longer any contributing tenants, any trust fund shall be dissolved as at the date of the termination of the lease, and any assets comprised in the fund immediately before its dissolution shall—

(a) if the payee is the landlord, be retained by him for his own use and benefit, and

(b) in any other case, be transferred to the landlord by the payee.

(8) Subsections (4), (6) and (7) shall have effect in relation to a contributing tenant subject to any express terms of his lease which relate to the distribution, either before or (as the case may be) at the termination of the lease, of amounts attributable to relevant service charges paid under its terms (whether the lease was granted before or after the commencement of this section).

(9) Subject to subsection (8), the provisions of this section shall prevail over the terms of any express or implied trust created by a lease so far as inconsistent with those provisions, other than an express trust so created before the commencement of this section.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.32 pm

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 13 and 14.

Mr. Patten: This new clause is a matter of great concern to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and fulfils an undertaking that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), who is not in his place this afternoon, to deal with the way in which service charges and sinking funds are managed while they remain in the hands of a landlord. It provides for the creation of a trust fund and it should ensure that the tax treatment of such funds is more equitable and less capricious than appears to be the case at present. It implements important recommendations in the Nugee report and applies also to leasehold dwellings other than flats where variable service charges are paid.

It is important that I explain exactly what the new clause is about in a little detail, because important taxation issues are involved, which are of great interest for up to 1·5 million people in Britain who will be affected.

The clause provides that any contributions to service charges as defined in section 8 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 are to be held in a trust fund. This will include sinking or reserve funds. The establishment of a trust in this way guards against appropriation or the landlord's insolvency.

The trustee is to be the person to whom the contributions are to be paid under the terms of the tenancy agreement. In most cases, the landlord will be the trustee, but not always. For example, there may be cases where a tenant's management company undertakes the repairs and provides services but does not have an interest in the reversion. The beneficiaries are to be the tenants for the time being under the tenancy agreements. They will have a remedy under trust law against the trustee for breach of trust and would be able to trace the funds under the existing arrangements for trust funds.

Subsection (5) enables the Secretary of State to provide by order the investment of funds held in such a trust. This is to give flexibility to the arrangements, to ensure, for example, that if the contributions are only to be held for a short period it will be possible to provide for them to be placed on deposit at a bank.

The clause also deals with what is to happen to the funds if a particular fund is no longer needed or if a leaseholder surrenders his or her lease or at the end of the leases. It does not override—I stress this—any express terms in the leases dealing with these matters. With that exception, the clause is simply intended to override any express terms unless those were entered into before the commencement of this provision. That is the important point.

We have been careful to draft the provisions as well as we can with an eye to the tax consequences. Putting the contribution into a trust fund, provided that it is drawn up in accordance with our requirements will avoid the situation which can happen at present, where the tenant's contribution can be taxed again as the landlord's income —which can, of course, produce a wide variety of tax consequences, not likely to be helpful to the tenants. Our proposals simply make the tax treatment of service charge money much less variable than has been the case up to now.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

50 Year Extension of Leases

'(1) In this Clause—

(a) a qualifying tenant is the lessee of a flat which if it were a house would otherwise qualify the tenant to obtain an extended lease under the Leasehold Enfranchisement Act 1967 (the 1967 Act);

(b) a qualifying landlord is a landlord who if the premises to which this section applies were a house would be bound to grant an extended lease under the 1967 Act.

(2) A qualifying tenant may apply to the Court to vary his lease by extending its term for a period of not longer than 50 years at any time when the lease has less than 50 years unexpired and the Court shall be bound to grant the application upon such terms as it shall think fit as to the terms of the lease other than a revised rent and premium for the extension.

(3) In the absence of agreement the Court shall incorporate in its order for extension such terms for rent and premium as may be determined by a rent assessment committee which shall have jurisdiction in that regard.

(4) The Secretary of State may by statutory instrument make provision for the procedure to be followed by the parties to an application made under this section.'.—*[Mr. John Fraser.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of the new clause is to give to tenants of leasehold flats the same rights of extension as are at present exercisable by tenants of leasehold houses; that is, assuming that the tenant is a person who lives in the property and has had a lease for more than 21 years.

I do not know whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had the chance yesterday to see "Spartacus" on television. I saw a little of it and it reminded me of two things—first, that when I was a schoolboy I used to deliver groceries to Peter Ustinov, and, having seen Spartacus yesterday, I am glad that I did not do it in Roman times; secondly, of the custom in the Roman empire of dying Romans emancipating their slaves.

That is appropriate, because here is a chance for a dying Parliament to emancipate about 1,000 leaseholders of flats who have leases which have less than, or are approaching less than, 50 or so years to run. The amendment would give such lessees the opportunity to extend their leases by up to 50 years, the right which is presently exercisable by the tenant of a leasehold house.

There are two outstanding reasons for the House accepting the new clause. First, it is now almost exactly 20 years since the House of Commons passed, under a Labour Government, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, which gave the tenants of leasehold houses two important rights. The first was the right to buy the freehold, which cannot be established in an exactly analogous way for the owner of a flat, because it is simply not possible or practicable for the owner of a flat to own the separate unapportioned freehold of his property. But it gave tenants of houses a second right which is analogous to

[Mr. John Fraser]

rights which could be conferred upon the lessees of flats — the right to extend the lease by 50 years with rent revisions at the end of the first 25 years. It is that right which I now seek, 20 years later, to extend to the owners of leasehold flats.

There are a number of other reasons why one should accept this proposition. First, the obvious reason is that it gives rights analogous to those possessed by people who own houses. Secondly, it would give the owners of leasehold flats the same kind of rights of extension and further security which are enjoyed by almost every other kind of lessee. Over the years, Parliament has given rights of extension to almost every kind of tenant. That right is enjoyed by short-term tenants of residential accommodation under the Rents Acts—indeed, they have a right to the almost perpetual extension of their lease, even unto their successors in title. The right has also been given to the owners of leasehold businesses.

With a few exceptions, every business man who receives notice to quit from his landlord, or whose lease comes to an end, has a right to apply to the county court for an extension of his lease. Rights of extension and security for much longer than under the original terms of the lease are enjoyed by the tenants of agricultural land. Therefore, I urge that the right of extension should be given to the one class of people who have not enjoyed it in the past—the tenants of flats on long leases.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important to the leaseholders of flats, if we enable them to extend their leases by up to 50 years, we shall also preserve the value of their homes. In most cases, someone's investment in his house or flat represents his life savings; his home is his principal, and sometimes his only, investment. Many people with leases that were first granted in the 1930s are now worried sick because their lease is becoming shorter and shorter and their property less and less likely to be saleable at its full value.

The Minister said in Committee that there was no evidence from banks or building societies that shortening leases were unsaleable, and I accept that. In a period of great housing shortage, particularly in London, it is probably not difficult to sell the lease of a flat even if it has only one year unexpired. However, that does not remove the anxiety from those who have spent 30 years paying a mortgage on a flat, and who see the value of their investment diminishing, usually at the time when they are about to retire and would like to rest on the benefit of their savings over many years. We should remove the anxiety of diminishing investment and give people security towards the end of their mortgage repayments and in the latter part of the period of their lease.

Fourthly, if we give tenants of leasehold flats the right to extend their leases, we shall provide them with an incentive to improve and invest in their home. One thing that this country needs more than anything else is better investment in housing. We invest rather less, both publicly and privately, in housing than almost any other country in the European Community. Somebody with a lease that is getting shorter has no incentive to invest money in central heating, double glazing or major refurbishment. If we allow the right of extension, we shall give people an incentive to continue to invest in bringing their homes up to date. Conversely, if people are not given the incentive to invest in their properties, a market develops in short leaseholds which do not have much value—"fag ends", as they are known in the trade. That can lead to a falling off in property standards and thus in living standards.

As I said in Committee, we can trace the unhappy childhoods of some of those living in our inner cities to the time when they occupied short leasehold houses, in the days before the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. It would be wrong to create again a state of affairs where people had no future in their homes, and therefore no great interest in them. That led to a decline in housing standards. People had no incentive to invest in their homes, and that had adverse effects upon those who grew up in them.

4.45 pm

I know from the correspondence that I have received over the years while campaigning for leasehold reform that thousands of leaseholders are anxious. The two central features of my campaign for leasehold reform have been the right to extend a lease and the right collectively to buy the freehold. I have had more correspondence than I can remember — mainly from people living in London but from many other parts of the country too. The most touching letters have been from people who have retired to flats in seaside resorts, who are deeply concerned about the diminishing value of their assets because they cannot extend their lease.

We must come to the time when Parliament grants tenants of leasehold flats the rights already enjoyed by tenants of leasehold houses. Although not many hon. Members are present today, I am sure that many, Labour and Conservative alike, will have been lobbied by their constituents and encouraged to vote for the new clause, which most people who comment on these matters believe to be right. The new clause is supported by the National Consumer Council and by many other consumer bodies as well as others who comment on these matters. This short debate will give hon. Members an opportunity to represent their constituents by voting for a right which we may already be 20 years late in establishing.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Unlike the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), I did not have the opportunity of sitting on the Committee, although my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) attended one of the sittings and contributed to the debates. I am glad to have a chance briefly to intervene today, because I support the intention of the hon. Member.

In Liverpool, I have seen many examples of people with shortening leases who are extremely worried about what will happen when those leases finally run out. Many such leases are like unexploded time bombs, ticking away in the hearts of our cities. It is therefore vital that we address ourselves to the consequences of doing nothing about leasehold reform. The prospect of speculators being able to buy up the leasehold of a property is anathema to many leaseholders, while others say that the property in which they live is being neglected because of the blighting effect of a shortening lease. The new clause is a practical and sensible measure to increase the period during which the leasehold can apply. It will give much security to many worried people, and that is why alliance Members will support it.

Mr. John Patten: I always find the remarks of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) illuminating. At each sitting of the Committee, I picked up a new and colourful expression to describe some aspect of life. The hon.

Gentleman taught me what was meant by the phrase "a nice little earner", and I now know what a "fag end" means in the context of housing law.

I should be tempted to accept the new clause if the hon. Gentleman could demonstrate to me that the extension of leaseholds would lead to more private investment in the repair and renovation of housing. I would accept it for that reason alone. But, alas, I do not think that there is evidence that the Leasehold Reform Act necessarily had that effect. At present, investment in repair and renovation of public sector housing is running at about £3 billion from the capital and current account and is at a record level. Equally, in the private sector, to which the Bill addresses itself, about £13 billion a year is spent on home improvement and maintenance—a very substantial sum. However, sadly, much of that money does not go into the repair of blocks of flats — or houses, which just fall within the scope of the Bill.

The money goes not into maintenance, damp-proof courses or re-roofing but into architecturally disagreeable neo-Georgian front doors and new kitchen units. A substantial sum is spent on the ephemera of housing maintenance and not enough on maintenance itself. Alas, there has been no evidence in the past 20 years that leasehold reform and the passing over into permanent ownership to people as freeholders that which they have previously held as leaseholders has made any difference to the amount invested in housing. That is one reason why I am not tempted by the new clause.

For once, I have got the hon. Member for Norwood on a minor point of law. This gives me enormous pleasure because, speaking as a non-lawyer, it is extremely difficult for someone like me to be pitched against the hon. Gentleman, who is an expert on housing law. I suggested in Standing Committee that the hon. Gentleman should have some kind of handicap during the sittings — possibly a bad hangover, or something like that—which would allow me an easier run through some of the Bill's legal intricacies.

I think that the hon. Gentleman was wrong when he said—I shall quote as well as I can, but I am sure that this is accurate—that the one class of tenants who do not have the right to an extension are the people whom we are considering. But that is not quite right. It is not right to say, as the hon. Gentleman appeared to do, that long leaseholders of flats have no rights when their leases come to an end. If they are living in the dwelling——

Mr. John Fraser: This is part I.

Mr. Patten: Exactly; I have been trumped by the hon. Gentleman's legal expertise. He did not even have the decency to let me get to the end of what I thought was the one aspect on which I had got him on a point of law.

If long leaseholders are living in the dwelling, they have the right under part I of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, as the hon. Gentleman just said, to continue to live there under a Rent Act-style tenancy. But, as I said in Committee, it is inescapable that the unexpired portion of leases granted for a fixed term reduces until the lease expires. That is the very nature of a leasehold agreement. A long leaseholder of a flat, whether in England or in Wales — I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) in the Chamber — with a fixed-term lease does not have a perpetual interest in the dwelling. He or she is not a freeholder. That is the nature of a leasehold contract. Eventually, his or her interest will expire and the ownership will revert to the freeholder of the building.

Anyone buying a lease should not be under any illusion about the nature of the interest which she or he is purchasing. Unfortunately too many leaseholders of flats do not come to terms with their status as leaseholders—hence the sorts of problems that exist in some inner cities in the provinces, to which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred. Leaseholders of flats do not have the right to extend their leases, although they may well be able to negotiate an extension.

I am not sure that we would be justified in giving such a right, which would override the terms of a contract that had been freely entered into between landlord and tenant. Throughout our consideration of the Bill, we have striven —the Opposition have generally concurred—to take an approach to the Bill which aimed to be even-handed between landlord and tenant. That has been the whole basis of the adoption of the recommendations in the excellent report by Mr. Edward Nugee's committee.

The hon. Member for Norwood agued, rightly, that the Leasehold Reform Act has been on the statute book for 20 years. What an issue it was, I understand, 20 years ago in one part of my constituency in Oxford. That is certainly accepted by all political parties, but that is not in itself an argument of justification for leasehold enfranchisement of those living in flats.

I think that the answer to the hon. Gentleman's rightful concern and that of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill will be the new commonhold system on which the Law Commission is working. It should enable people to own flats on a basis equivalent to the condominium or strata title system used in many other countries—for example, Australia — which gets around so many of these problems. Meanwhile, I am concerned to ensure that lending institutions are as helpful as possible. I am glad that the researches of the hon. Member for Norwood into the attitudes of building societies show that they are trying to be helpful. My Department will continue to keep an eye on this issue.

The new clause, as drafted, could create severe practical problems, apart from anything else, in blocks that have a life expectancy of less than 50 years. For that reason, if all the leases come to an end on different dates, which could well be the result, the landlord who wishes to develop the building and who may have a good case for doing so will be in considerable difficulty. I do not think that the new clause quite faces up to that. That is one reason why the Nugee committee rejected statutory rights to extend leases. To my mind, that was right.

Mr. John Fraser: I have thought about the redevelopment argument and the question whether one should give the landlord the right to resist the leaseholders' right to have an extension of the lease where the block is due for redevelopment. On balance, I reject that argument. It does not apply to leasehold houses. If there is to be redevelopment, I see no reason why the lessees of the flats should not share in the redevelopment value of the property as much as the freeholder. Essentially, the leaseholders have bought their individual holding and, if the premises are to be redeveloped, they ought to share any profit that arises by way of compensation for the loss of their homes.

[Mr. John Fraser]

There is no consistent or logical attitude to this matter. If one assumes that a block of flats on which the local authority has the freehold is getting on in years and that the tenant exercises the right to buy, he would in any event be entitled to a 125-year lease under the 1985 Act. The Government have made no distinction between those blocks of flats that do not have a 125-year life and those that do. That disposes of that argument.

The real case for the new clause is that, until now, we have not enjoyed a modern system of granting ownership of flats. We are dealing with a defect in the law. There was no other way of dealing with the sale of flats with leases from the 1930s because the law was inadequate. That is why the Law Commission is considering this matter. I hope that, eventually, we shall move to the practice in other countries—the United States, Australia, and so on —whereby individually a block of flats is owned by residential occupiers and collectively they have a share in an undivided freehold.

That is all right for the future, but we are still left with the problem of the past. Even if there is commonhold for the future, it does not mean that there will be retrospective conversion for existing holdings. For that reason, in the meantime we need to allow people to have an extension of their leases. If we do not give that extension, the tenants of flats will be subject to exploitation by freeholders—sometimes by those who speculatively buy freeholds to make as much as they can from the exploitation of tenants —and people will ask for excessive premiums for the extension of leases. There will be no shortage of people offering extensions of leases, irrespective of the age of the flats. The problem will be how to achieve free bargaining between the landlord and the tenant.

Perhaps we can agree to differ. I suppose that one ought to rename Georgian doors RTB doors, because they are the badge of those who have bought their premises from a local authority. It is my experience that, when people enlarge their interest, they usually spend rather more money on it. Often the enlargement of the interest takes place at the same time as the sale of the property. All the evidence in part 2 of the last house conditions survey shows that, when there is a change of ownership—whether by buying from a local authority or by any other means—a great deal of private investment then goes into housing. Above all, I am concerned about the anxiety of people who fear the loss of their investment—perhaps their only investment. For that reason, I propose to divide the House on the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a second time.

The House divided: Ayes 139, Noes 197.

Division No. 152] **[5.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Lloyd and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baldry, Tony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney

Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:

Mr. Michael Portillo and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 12

RIGHT OF QUALIFYING TENANTS TO COMPEL SALE ETC. BY NEW LANDLORD

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 14, line 29, leave out 'one month' and insert 'three months'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 2.

Mr. Patten: Throughout the Standing Committee proceedings, hon. Members of all parties tried to improve the Bill, and I think that we have done so. This amendment extends to three months the period for tenants to serve a purchase notice if they want to exercise their right to buy the property from the new landlord in a situation where a former landlord failed to comply with the right of first refusal.

In Committee I undertook to reconsider extending the minimum period following the amendments put down by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), and the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), whom I do not see in his accustomed place in the Chamber. On reflection, I accept that one month is too tight if residents have not known before then exactly what the terms of the sale to the new landlord were or the price paid. Even two months in a case where they already know the terms and the price and have not had to ask the new landlord may not be long enough. So I believe that it would be better to allow three months in each case. I think that this strikes a fairer balance without unduly prolonging the uncertainty for the new landlord, because that would be unfair.

I reiterate that on these Benches we have tried throughout to strike a fair balance between the good and responsible landlord and the good and responsible tenant. I think that these amendments meet the points raised in Committee and I commend them to the House.

Mr. John Fraser: I am grateful to the Minister for having considered the points made in Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made, No. 2, in page 14, line 31, leave out 'specified' and insert 'of three months beginning with the date mentioned'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 12, as amended, added to the Bill.

Clause 13

DETERMINATION BY RENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES OF QUESTIONS RELATING TO PURCHASE NOTICES

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 15, line 46, after second 'the' insert 'estate or'.

No. 4, in page 15, line 47, after 'or', insert 'relating'. —*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 13, as amended, added to the Bill.

Clause 15

RIGHT OF QUALIFYING TENANTS TO COMPEL GRANT OF NEW TENANCY BY SUPERIOR LANDLORD

Amendments made: No. 5, in page 17, line 13, leave out 'of that tenancy' and insert 'referred to in subsection (1A) below'.

No. 6, in page 17, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) Those terms are—

(a) the terms of the relevant tenancy; and

(b) if the new landlord paid any amount to the landlord as consideration for the surrender by him of that tenancy, that any such amount is paid to the new landlord by the person or persons so nominated.'.

No. 7, in page 17, line 24, leave out '(1)' and insert '(1A)'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 15, as amended, added to the Bill.

Clause 20

CONSTRUCTION OF PART 1 AND POWER OF SECRETARY OF STATE TO PRESCRIBE MODIFICATIONS

Mr. John Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 22, line 26, leave out '5' and insert '1'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 9, in page 22, line 26, at end insert

'including adaptation to apply the right of first refusal to other leasehold residential property.'.

No. 16, in the title, line 1, after 'flats', insert

'and other leasehold residential property'.

5.15 pm

Mr. Fraser: This amendment would give the right of first refusal which is granted to the leaseholders of flats in this Bill to the owners of leasehold houses as well.

On the last set of amendments to which I spoke, I argued that those who own flats should have the same rights as those who own houses. In this case, the argument is reversed, that those who own houses ought to have the same rights as those who own flats. This is not an idiosyncratic amendment but one that has been urged upon me by the South Wales Leaseholders Association and other groups of owners of leasehold houses, because they have suffered from exploitation by speculators buying up large freeholds on which the value of the reversion is not very great, where it is worth so little that it is hardly worth the leaseholder exercising rights of enfranchisement, since the cost of buying the freehold where there is a 999-year lease may be greater than the price of the land itself.

What has happened is that freeholders have bought reversions to houses and have then gone to the tenants and sought officiously to enforce insurance covenants. They have caused fear to tenants. They have insisted upon consent being given to improvements and certain major alterations to the property. They have acted in a way that is generally calculated to exploit the tenants and cause them fear and put money into the pockets of the reversion owner.

It is for those reasons that the tenants of leasehold houses have suggested to me that they ought to have the same rights of refusal as those who own leasehold flats. It would not be a great obligation upon the landlord. He would simply have to notify the tenant before, say, the property was put up for auction or sold by private treaty, to give the tenant first right to buy that reversion. If this could be done collectively, it would remove many of the causes of the grievance which has been expressed by those in south Wales. My hon. Friends have brought forward a number of examples of exploitation taking place in the north-west of England as well.

For reasons that were well rehearsed in Committee, therefore, I am adopting the suggestions that have been put to me and urging the Government to recognise that the right of first refusal should apply to all freehold reversions to residential property, not just to flats.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): The Opposition are indeed rehearsing some of the arguments that we heard in Committee. I reiterate that there is no place in our book for unscrupulous activities on the part of such landlords whether by deliberate act of by sheer incompetence.

I do not think, however, that we would want to widen the powers to modify the procedures in clause 20 to cover clauses 1 to 4, because those first four clauses set out the basic framework within which the right of first refusal procedures operate. They set out who is entitled to the right and which property, which landlords and what types of disposal it applies to.

Nor do I think that it would be sensible to extend the provisions in part 1 to leasehold houses. These would be mainly occupied by persons who are eligible to enfranchise under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. As I pointed out in Committee, such a person can already buy the freeholder's interest on the basis of the terms set out in that Act irrespective of whether the freeholder wishes to sell. So if such a person is worried, for example, about the possibility of the landlord's interest changing hands at auction, he can resolve the problem by exercising his rights under the 1967 Act, provided he fulfils the requirements set out therein. This proposal gives them nothing that they do not have already.

The right of first refusal recognises the interests of people living in flats in the sale of the ownership of their block. Flat dwellers, however, do not have the rights of leaseholders of houses to enfranchise under the 1967 Act because of all the difficulties of which we are well aware, about the enforcement of obligations on successors in title and about the repair and maintenance of the block as a whole.

Mr. John Fraser: The Minister said that this was a re-run of arguments which we had in Committee. Our proceedings have been followed by the South Wales Leaseholders Association. Perhaps I could read out its comments on what the Minister has just said, as made in a letter which one of its officials sent to the *Western Mail*, described in the cutting as "The quality voice of Wales". It was not convinced by the arguments in Committee, any more than it will be convinced by the arguments now. It said:

"It is not a party political issue. All parties have expressed support for the principle of further reform for the property laws.

Our proposed amendments to the Landlord and Tenant Bill to allow the house leaseholder 'Right of first Refusal' when the landlord wants to sell, would provide a clear indication that the Government wishes to help the leaseholder."

The association states:

"In the absence of such a demonstration of intent, the leaseholder, who packs substantial political clout with 3 million votes in the UK, may decide to look to others for help."

The association is not convinced that existing arrangements to buy at auction or negotiate are adequate. It has complained long and loud about the abuses and it believes that the amendment would suit its needs.

Mr. Mark Robinson: To follow up on the last point made by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), I want to make it absolutely clear that we give major protection to tenants in the Bill through the extension of the clauses on insurance. I also want to reiterate the point made in Committee, that the framework of the amendments under discussion and the suggestions contained in them, are way beyond the scope of the Nugee report. They can be considered within the context of discussions on wider leasehold reform. In those circumstances, I am sure that we will return to this matter in another form.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 29

CONDITIONS FOR MAKING ACQUISITION ORDERS

Mr. John Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 29, line 26, leave out 'may' and insert 'shall'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 11, in page 29, line 35, leave out from beginning to end of line 16 on page 30 and insert—

'*(b)* the conditions in section 28 are complied with'.

Mr. Fraser: Amendment No. 10 would give leaseholders of flats the absolute right to purchase the freehold irrespective of whether the landlord had fallen down on his obligations. The way in which the Bill is structured at present means that tenants have the right in some circumstances to apply to the courts to appoint a manager. If a manager has been appointed, or if there are other reasons to show that the landlord has failed in his obligations, tenants have the right to go to court to ask for a compulsory purchase order to collectively acquire the freehold. That is a discretionary remedy in the hands of the tenants and that remedy turns upon the landlord neglecting his responsibilities.

There is a widespread view that the tenants should have the right to buy the freehold irrespective of the nature of the landlord's performance. If a landlord has behaved badly, the tenants would want to exercise that right. There is a general opinion that tenants should have the right to enfranchise collectively, whatever the circumstances. That point was beyond the remit of the Nugee report. However, that right is partly supported in the Minister's comments about the Law Commission and the need for a new system of common law. That suggested that there should be a collective right to the reversion of ownership of flats.

I have received a letter from the Consumers Association which supports that proposition.

"We especially welcome the recognition of the leaseholders' right to buy, but think that the Government should take this principle further still. We would like to see more comprehenive rights for leasehold flat owners to buy their freehold if a clear majority wish to. We will be looking more closely at the right to buy provisions in the Bill when it reaches Committee."

The Bill has now left Committee and I want to assert the suggestion made by the Consumers Association. That suggestion is not novel and I have proposed it frequently. It should be recognised, and it would shorten many of the procedures if tenants had an unfettered right to buy the freehold at a market value. Because there is a wide consensus on this matter among reputable bodies, I want to press the amendment.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) has touched on the politics of this legislation, which involves how far the Government want to go beyond striking a balance between landlord and tenant and really extending the opportunities for people to become owner-occupiers. I would have thought that the amendment might commend itself to the Government as the Conservative party claims to believe in the principle of a property-owning democracy. People living in properties should have the maximum number of opportunities to purchase the property by themselves or as a co-operative. I know that the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction has great sympathy for the housing co-operative movement. When people live in groups of flats, there are particular opportunities for properties to be assigned to housing co-operatives.

Although the Minister will not be able to accept the amendment today, I hope that he will assure the House that the Government will return to these matters of extending the rights of people living in private property and allow them the same rights as those given to people living in council property in their opportunities to become owner-occupiers. Property should not simply involve the profit motive or speculation. If someone lives in a property —whether that person is a private or a public tenant— he should have the right to move into personal or co-operative ownership.

Mr. John Patten: I thank the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for his kind words about my interest in housing co-operatives. I shall continue to do all that I possibly can to promote the interests of the co-operative movement in its rapidly developing and varied forms. I can say that I have put my money — or rather the taxpayers' money — where my mouth is with regard to one or two developments in Liverpool to help people who wanted to run their own lives. I wish those people well in their arrangements.

We are in danger of widening the debate. It is not for me to judge whether it should be widened too far; that is a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, so far on Second Reading and in Committee we have kept our eyes very much on the issue that led the Government to set up the Nugee committee in the first place. We set up the committee to tackle the problems of people faced with bad management by a minority of bad landlords. The committee was not concerned with wider issues of owner-occupation, leasehold reform — which we have already discussed earlier—or many other issues.

We must be very cautious before we attempt, as I hope we will not do in the declining moments of this important legislation, to bolt on ill-thought-out bits and pieces—ill thought out by both sides of the House, including by me, through lack of time—to bring about leasehold reform and extensions of leasehold. That would be a serious mistake. We must remember that the Bill was brought into existence following the Nugee committee report. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced his approval for the measure in

[Mr. John Patten]

April 1986. We have moved with the speed of light when compared with the standards of previous Governments in introducing this Bill and reaching this stage. We have achieved that thanks to the co-operation of Her Majesty's official Opposition and the Liberal party spokesman in Standing Committee.

Having said that, I want to allow myself one sentence which may stray into the wider issues raised by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. I may include a semi-colon or two in this sentence if you allow me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and if *Hansard* allows semi-colons. I can never remember whether *Hansard* allows them. However, the Government believe that the right to buy and home ownership are very important; we have come to believe more and more that the right to rent is equally important and we wish to provide a greater variety of rented housing just as we wish to provide greater opportunities for people to own their own homes. I leave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill with that thought.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales and I made it clear that we regard the provisions of part III dealing with the grant of an acquisition order as a matter of last resort. We believed it would occur only when every other attempt to install a manager to run a block of flats had failed. Then, only as a very unusual circumstance would an acquisition order go to court.

We want to encourage and reassure good landlords. We want more good landlords — private landlords, institutional landlords and those landlords from building societies and pension funds working with housing associations and the housing co-operative movement acting as good landlords. I am certainly not seeking to facilitate the wholesale transfer of blocks of flats out of the hands of responsible owners by the provisions contained in the Bill.

The Bill makes careful provision for the circumstances in which an acquisition offer can be made. It leaves the matter essentially to the discretion of the courts, and quite right too. I do not want to do anything in the Bill to undermine the relationship between landlord and tenant or to discourage freeholders from the proper management of blocks in which they have the reversionary interest. Many freeholders, in London and in provincial cities, carry out their duties well.

Therefore, I cannot accept the amendment and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will wish to withdraw it.

5.30 pm

Mr. John Fraser: I do not intend to withdraw it.

I must quarrel with the Minister for a moment about the phrase "the right to rent", which he introduces from time to time. I described it the other day as a fantasy in his mind, and a phrase which was stolen from the Labour housing group. I do not know where the right to rent exists. However, I can think of two examples of it. First, there was the right to rent that the Opposition tried to give prospective council tenants, so that if a property had been empty for more than six months, prospective tenants would have the right to rent that accommodation by giving notice in writing to the landlord. That amendment was voted down by the Government.

Secondly, another successful example of the right to rent, which I strongly supported, was called "do-it-yourself shared ownership". It was so successful as a right to rent that the Government had to abort it. Apart from those two occasions, I do not know of any circumstances in which the Government have done anything, realistically, to establish such a right to rent. I wish that the Minister would stop using that phrase unless he intends to do something about it.

All of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was out of order. However, it would be in order for me to press this matter to a Division.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Gentleman need not be too impatient for too long about more substance for the fine phrase that I have used. Whatever else the Government want to do, we want to see variety in relation to this pair of amendments and a variety of provision for rented homes. There is still a place for the traditional relationship of lessor and lessees in blocks of flats. We want that relationship to continue and to do what we can to promote good landlords, of whom there are many.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 141, Noes 192.

Division No. 153] **[5.36 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Fisher, Mark
Alton, David	Flannery, Martin
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Ashdown, Paddy	Foster, Derek
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Foulkes, George
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary	George, Bruce
Barron, Kevin	Golding, Mrs Llin
Beith, A. J.	Gould, Bryan
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Blair, Anthony	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Boyes, Roland	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Haynes, Frank
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Heffer, Eric S.
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Home Robertson, John
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Hoyle, Douglas
Caborn, Richard	Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.	Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Janner, Hon Greville
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Canavan, Dennis	John, Brynmor
Carter-Jones, Lewis	Kirkwood, Archy
Cartwright, John	Lamond, James
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Clarke, Thomas	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Clay, Robert	Litherland, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	McCartney, Hugh
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Conlan, Bernard	McGuire, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	McKelvey, William
Corbyn, Jeremy	MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Craigen, J. M.	McTaggart, Robert
Crowther, Stan	McWilliam, John
Cunningham, Dr John	Marek, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*	Martin, Michael
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Deakins, Eric	Maxton, John
Dixon, Donald	Maynard, Miss Joan
Dobson, Frank	Meacher, Michael
Dormand, Jack	Mikardo, Ian
Douglas, Dick	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Dubs, Alfred	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Duffy, A. E. P.	O'Brien, William
Eastham, Ken	O'Neill, Martin
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Fatchett, Derek	Park, George

Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baldry, Tony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Maclarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Portillo and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 35

APPLICATION BY PARTY TO LEASE FOR VARIATION OF LEASE

Mr. John Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 35, line 27, at end insert——

'(*aa*) existence of rising ground rents that take the sum above the premium threshold for the purpose of the Rent Act 1977,

(*bb*) existence of a provision allowing the landlord to take 100 per cent. of repair costs money in advance,

(*cc*) existence of a covenant that prevents a leaseholder from objecting to planning consent to the landlord's application for development within the curtilage,

(*dd*) No provision for reasonable licence fee for use of car parking facilities,

(*ee*) no provision for the creation of reserve funds,

(*ff*) no provision for the interest earned on the reserve funds to insure for the block,

(*gg*) no provision for the reserve funds to be held in an account immune from the landlord's creditors and

(*hh*) no provision to deal with the presence of dissimilar leases.'.

The amendment was suggested by some leaseholders' associations. Part of it has already been dealt wth, for example the interest on reserve funds and making a reserve fund immune from a landlord's creditors.

A couple of points have caused anxiety. The first relates to the right to make a variation in a lease where rising ground rents may take the sum above the premium threshold for the purpose of the Rent Act 1977. If the rent

[Mr. John Fraser]

under a long lease rises above two thirds of the rateable value, in some circumstances the tenant is unable to recover a premium on the sale of the lease which is greater than the premium paid when it was lawful to do so. That catch has upset some leaseholders where rent revision clauses in leases have sometimes made the lease virtually unsaleable. Leaseholders are asking that the parties have the right to apply to a court to vary a lease where a lease has become unexpectedly unsaleable as a result of a rise in ground rents.

Other matters were rehearsed in Committee, such as a covenant which would prevent a leaseholder from rejecting a planning consent on the landlord's application to develop within the curtilage. In some circumstances a landlord may wish to build on an open space which has been enjoyed as a facility by the tenant, or to add two storeys to a block to the discomfort of the tenants. Tenants feel that if the lease does not provide for the right of objection under those circumstances, it certainly should do.

Similarly, provision should be made for correcting leases which do not provide for a licence fee for car parking facilities. The other matters were intended to draw the attention of Government officials and I shall not deal with them again. The problem of rising ground rent is particularly important and perhaps the Minister can say whether the Government will consider further powers to vary leases if this continues to be a problem.

5.45 pm

Mr. John Patten: I take seriously the points made by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and I hope that he and those who have written to him, my officials and me will not consider it tiresome or niggardly if I say again that the Bill is not the right vehicle to deal with these problems. The Bill deals with tenants who live in badly managed blocks of flats and that is the issue that we have kept our eye on throughout.

The amendment seeks to add several extra items to the list of topics on which an application for a variation in a lease can be made and, as the hon. Gentleman was good enough to say, it has to some extent been overtaken by events.

It seems odd to have a discussion on this without the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) present. He has been with us throughout all our proceedings and it is strange not having him here to talk on these issues. If he were present I hope that he, too, would be satisfied that our new clause, dealing with service charge contributions to be held in trust and covering sinking or reserve funds set up for similar purposes to service charge funds, takes care of the sixth and seventh items on the list of items, for which we are indebted to the Federation of Private Residents' Associations. The sixth and seventh items deal with safeguarding the interest earned on reserve funds and safeguarding the fund from a landlord's creditors. I hope that tenants regard those as major steps forward in consumer protection, and that the Consumers Association and others will recognise the major strides forward that the Government have made.

I cannot see anything in the remainder of the list which constitutes such a major, potential defect in a lease as to warrant an individual leaseholder going to court to seek a variation order, which is a serious business. The fifth item, for example — provision for the creation of a reserve fund — seems eminently suitable for an application under clause 37 where there is a sufficient majority. This is not something which only one or two leaseholders or, indeed, the landlord should seek to impose on the leases of a large block of flats without substantial support from the other parties concerned.

Of the other items, one attempts to deal with escalating ground rents which, if they rise to two thirds of the rateable value, will come within the ambit of the Rent Acts, so that a premium cannot be charged for the lease. Section 78 of the Housing Act 1980 set out certain tightly defined circumstances in which this rule did not apply. I am aware that there may still be some problems with the operation of section 127 of the Rent Act 1977 which was amended by section 78 of the 1980 Act. I am still considering this complicated issue.

I have received some very interesting correspondence. A firm of solicitors, Bischoff and Company, wrote to me with some interesting ideas how to deal with this point. However, it is a quite complex area and I think that it is best left to a subsequent piece of legislation that looks at rented housing overall. I do not think that it can be dealt with satisfactorily in this manner because, in effect, it would ask the court to say to which leases the Rent Act limitation on premiums should apply, and I am not sure that that is right.

I do not think that it would be right to remove the landlord's ability to claim advance payments to cover the estimated cost of works or repairs where the costs can be recovered from the tenant, since it could affect the way in which the works were financed and would possibly involve borrowing. I must stress the fact that the tenants are protected against unreasonable charges by the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Although the other items touch on points with which I have much sympathy and about which I shall think with regard to future legislation — for example, applications to carry out works which affect the interests of the leaseholders, such as car-parking charges and the effects of dissimilar leases — these are matters which, once they have been agreed, are difficult to justify intervening in simply at the behest of one of the parties to the lease. That seems to break the balance between good landlord and good tenant, which we seek to promote and preserve and hope in the future to enhance.

None of these items are such that they fundamentally affect the management of the block and/or the standard of the accommodation and the residents in the same way as the matters that we have listed in clause 35.

I hope that what I have said — I have chosen my words carefully — will show enough good will towards the general drift of the points put forward to persuade the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. John Fraser: On this occasion I shall respond. I do not intend to press these matters further. The purpose of the amendment is to draw attention to a number of problems that have arisen over defective leases which, as the Minister said, do not relate to management.

I shall mention one more point — for the sake of neatly wrapping up the matter — which is called the "royal lives clause" in leases. The leaseholder format excludes from enfranchisement those leases which are terminable, "after a death or marriage". The exclusion was clearly intended to refer to the death or marriage of the

tenant, but due to a drafting error it was not expressed so precisely. As a result, certain landlords have insisted on a clause in their leases which allows the lease to be terminated,

"after the death or marriage of the last survivor of King George V."

This artificial device has become known as the "royal lives clause".

The Housing Act 1980 outlawed the royal lives clause in all leases granted after the 18 April 1980, but nothing was done about the leases which were granted before that. Clearly, they were granted in such terms to deprive tenants of their rights of security.

I have a letter which was written to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on that matter. The author of the letter is a lessee under a royal lives lease. He has written to his own Member of Parliament and the Department of the Environment about what he calls "the royal lives loophole". I know that the Bill is not the vehicle for dealing with this, but I raised the matter to draw the Minister's attention to what is a cause of concern for a small number of tenants who have been subject to abuse by this kind of lease, particularly where it was granted before 1980.

I merely want to draw attention to that matter and perhaps we can come back to it at a later stage.

Mr. John Patten: I do not want the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), the House or those who read our proceedings in *Hansard* to think for one moment that I am not wholly and utterly familiar with the royal lives issue. It is a matter in which I have become expert in almost two years as Minister for Housing Urban Affairs and Construction, with the mastery and interest for detail for which I am known and admired by my civil servants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order.

Mr. Patten: I was pointing in a general sense, not at any unmentionable or invisible person.

This is an important issue which affects a small number of people. The hon. Member for Norwood is quite right to say that we must look at the question of leases of houses or flats which provide that the lease expires on the death of a named person. The named person is usually a member of the royal family, frequently "the heirs of George V". That is not always the case. Ingenious persons who are seeking to get round the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 have often sought to use other names to attempt to spin out the leases.

We deliberately closed that loophole in the Housing Act 1980. The hon. Member for Norwood will recall that paragraph 3 of schedule 21 was the exact entry in the Housing Act. We did that deliberately only in respect of leases granted after 18 April 1980. We did not do that because it was some due date in the passage of the Bill's proceedings; we did it knowing that some leaseholders of houses with leases granted before that date still cannot enfranchise under the 1967 Act. The reason for that is the same reason why I do not seek to change it now—unless we have more persuasive argument—and that is that it is the Government's wish not to override the terms of contract which had already been freely entered into by landlord and tenant. We wish, quite properly, to provide a fair and critical balance between landlord and tenant. That remains my view.

I am delighted that the hon. Member for Norwood should have raised this burning issue, which affects a small number of people who, doubtless, continue to feel aggrieved, even though they freely entered into a bargain with their prospective landlord. I do not wish to dismiss their concerns lightly. I am not moved by the arguments put forward by the hon. Gentleman this afternoon, and he has said that he does not regard the Bill as the proper vehicle to attempt to deal with this issue but is simply flagging it up and bringing it to the attention of the House.

I shall undertake in consideration of future legislation to look at this issue to see whether anything can be done, although I would have to be moved a long way to be persuaded that we should break the principle of the reasonable agreement reached freely, with no coercion, between a good landlord and a good tenant.

Mr. John Fraser: The Government have not been slow to revise the terms of leases and adjust the balance of rights and liabilities between the tenants of long leases that have been granted under the right to buy. I was merely flagging up the matter at this point and I therefore beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 51

JURISDICTION OF COUNTY COURTS

Amendment made: No. 13, in page 46, line 39, leave out 'and' insert—

'*(aa)* any provision of section *(Service charge contributions to be held in trust)*; and '.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 52

REGULATIONS AND ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 47, line 18, after '25(6)', insert

'. *(Service charge contributions to be held in trust)* (5)'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 61

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 51, line 8, leave out from 'transitional' to end of line 9 and insert

', incidental, supplemental or consequential provision or saving as the Secretary of State considers necessary or expedient in connection with the coming into force of any provision of this Act or the operation of any enactment which is repealed or amended by a provision of this Act during any period when the repeal of amendment is not wholly in force.'.

5.58 pm

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The principles underlying the Bill, happily, have commanded all-party support, which we value. There is general recognition throughout the House of the need to strengthen the rights of those who are living in privately owned blocks of flats, and of the relevance of the Nugee committee and its excellent findings in that context.

The Nugee committee struck the right balance between measures to improve the tenants' position and the need to safeguard the interests of landlords and their agents. We wish to encourage good landlords; we want to see more of them, not fewer. That balance has been maintained in Standing Committee and on Report and I should like to thank hon. Members who have made some weighty

[Mr. John Patten]

contributions during the passage of the Bill, which is of such importance for those who are living in privately owned blocks of flats, which have led to the improvement of the Bill.

5.59 pm

Mr. John Fraser: I promised not this year but last that when the Bill came forward the Opposition would facilitate its passage even though we wanted it to go further in two respects. The Minister will agree that I have kept my promise. I am glad to see the Bill speeding on its way. I think it is the right point at which to congratulate further the Nugee committee on the excellent work which it did.

The Bill affects private rights between landlord and tenant. It is extremely important that, once the Bill leaves this House with all-party support, it is dispatched to another place as quickly as possible. Since rumour has it that we are likely to have a general election soon, I hope that the Bill will become law before a general election takes place.

5.59 pm

Mr. Alton: This is one of those rare but pleasant occasions on which there is all-party support in the House for a piece of legislation. Like the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), I hope that not only will the Bill receive its Third Reading today and rapidly go through its stages in another place but that, if there is to be a general election, it will not be one of the Bills which is lost in indecent haste after the local elections on Thursday.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) welcomed the Bill on Second Reading, he said that it could have a civilising influence in the jungle of property speculation. Since then many useful amendments have been made in Committee, especially that service charge contributions should be held in trust. However, we still need to be vigilant about ensuring that loopholes are not exploited by landlords and that the rights of private tenants to high standards of repair and maintenance are maintained.

The Minister has talked much this afternoon about achieving the right balance between the rights of tenants and the rights of landlords. Surely all of us recognise that there has been an unfortunate growth in the exploitation of tenants in the last few years. Shelter estimates that there are some 80,000 homeless people, many of them sleeping rough on park benches or in cardboard city. It is important that we provide them with places to live. If private landlords are to play a part in that process, it must be with adequate safeguards.

Homelessness has become a growth industry and frequently we have seen how housing benefits can be abused and misused by private landlords as a licence to print money. On a previous occasion I put before the House the example of one landlord who is taking £140,000 a year from the collection of private rents for one property in my constituency through abuse of the housing benefit system. Clearly that is an example of the balance between the rights of tenants and the rights of the landlord getting out of skew and of the landlord using the system purely to create profit and not to provide for a need.

We will have to return to such issues and to the role of the rent officer in safeguarding the rights of private tenants. We will have to consider further leasehold reform. We will have to examine again the right to buy for private tenants and, indeed, the right to co-operate. Most important, it is vital that, whenever loopholes are seen to be exploited by bad landlords, this House must act vigorously in protecting those tenants who can often be so badly used.

With those caveats and conditions, I very much welcome the Bill and hope that we shall swiftly give it a Third Reading.

6.2 pm

Mr. John Patten: By leave of the House, if I may, I should like to thank the hon. Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for their warm welcome for the Bill. I agree with the hon. Member for Norwood that he has more than fully carried out his undertaking, given on behalf of the official Opposition some time ago, to facilitate the passage of the Bill through the House.

The Bill is much improved and is now ready to go to another place. I share entirely the hope of both hon. Gentlemen that it will speedily be passed through another place. May I suggest to them that they speak to their noble Friends to make sure that the Bill is welcomed warmly in the interests of getting it into law purely to help those whom we all in this House decided needed help, namely the tenants of badly managed blocks of flats?

This is an important piece of consumer legislation aimed at helping those who have a minority of bad landlords. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Rate Support Grant (England)

6.3 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 330), a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th April, be approved.

It was the writer of Ecclesiastes who said:

"of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

Misquoting him a little, I might say that of the making of many rate support grant reports, there is no end. Here we have to consider the fourth RSG report within six weeks. This must be a record. No doubt the people from the "Guinness Book of Records", who avidly observe these things, will be watching events closely.

This is the rate support grant supplementary report which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State laid before the House on 30 April. The debate is taking place an unusually short time after the laying before the House of the report because we have been urged by local authorities and all their associations to bring it forward and to pay the extra grant which it gives as soon as we could.

The report is concerned principally with school-teachers' pay. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced to the House on 2 March his proposals for teachers' pay under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. We promised that the national taxpayer would make a significant contribution towards the extra cost that would result in 1986-87 and 1987-88. This would be in the form of block grant over and above that already provided for in the relevant RSG settlements. Most teachers will get their increased pay at the end of May and, if the House approves this supplementary report tonight, education authorities will have before then the block grant that it makes available.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Minister said a moment ago that the Government had decided that the taxpayer should make a significant contribution to the cost of the teachers' pay settlement. If that is so, can he explain why the Inner London education authority is to get nothing from central Government to help pay the £20 million cost of the award and why in the borough of Richmond the additional cost of nearly £1 million will mean a loss of grant of £81,000? How does that square with the statement which he has just made?

Dr. Boyson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter. I intended to deal with it later but it is always more interesting to do so in answer to a question because it gets me away from my brief, to the enjoyment of myself and other hon. Members.

The basis on which the allocation is made is the presumption that, in addition to the 3·75 per cent. in the original RSG settlement, local authorities would have to have a 4p poundage to meet the increased cost of teachers' pay. Local authorities which can pay for the increase with a 4p poundage will get nothing or practically nothing. If they need more than a 4p poundage, they will get an additional grant. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), for whom I have great regard, has a sense of equity and justice and he will realise that the money is going to those who need it. I am sure that there will be approval, even from the hon. Member who used to represent Stockport.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Denton and Reddish.

Dr. Boyson: Yes, Denton and Reddish. The change of name of his constituency is longer and no doubt slows him down. No doubt he will also welcome the fact that this is being done in equity.

Mr. Straw: Where is the equity in the London borough of Richmond facing an increase of nearly £1 million and losing £81,000 in grant?

Dr. Boyson: Like the Inner London education authority, the borough of Richmond has large resources. The payment is being made through the normal system of block grant; that is why ILEA and Richmond are being treated in that way.

The report we are now considering deals with 1987-88. We aim to deal with 1986-87 as soon as we can and we expect to be laying a supplementary report for that year in early June. The House will recall that the 1987-88 settlement provided for a general increase in local authority costs, including teachers' pay, of 3·75 per cent. above local authorities' own budgeted expenditure in 1986-87. On top of that, the Government agreed to increase provision by £460 million in England, the estimated extra cost of the teachers' pay rise.

This is reflected in an increase of £460 million to education grant-related expenditure assessments. I should explain that the supplementary report does not change the way in which education GREAs are calculated, as I mentioned earlier. It increases the schools' grant-related expenditure control totals by the £460 million that we promised. That extra grant-related expenditure is then allocated to individual education authorities by the methodology adopted in the main report. Thus, each education authority obtains its share of the extra GREA according to the same method of measuring educational needs as was used before.

At the same time, the Government promised to make a significant contribution to the extra costs. We said that we would ask the taxpayer to pay £183 million to increase block grants to English education authorities in 1987-88. For that purpose we assumed that all authorities in England would spend at the levels that are assumed in the main report, increased for education authorities by the estimated extra cost of the teachers' pay rise above the 3·75 per cent. already allowed for in the RSG settlement. We have made good that promise in this supplementary report by increasing aggregate Exchequer grant—the total of Exchequer grant made available by the Government in support of local authorities spending—by £183 million, bringing the total up to £13,025 million. Estimates of specific and supplementary grants are unchanged since the settlement, so RSG increases to £9,732 million. As domestic rate relief grant is also unchanged at £717 million, the amount of block grant available for distribution is increased in the report from £8,832 million to £9,015 million.

We have, of course, consulted local authority associations about our proposals for the supplementary report, and have taken account of the views that they expressed, as well as those that were expressed by

[Dr. Boyson]

individual authorities. All authorities were concerned to obtain the money quickly. That is why the supplementary report is being debated at such speed. At £13,025 million, aggregate Exchequer grant is 9·2 per cent., or £1·1 billion, more than last year's total. That illustrates again how good this year's RSG settlement is. I expected to hear sounds of approval at that point in my speech. We should have practised earlier. I note the cheerfulness of certain Opposition hon. Members, but the "Hear, hears" were slow in coming. Perhaps the House should have a break at some stage so that we all come back refreshed and reinvigorated, if not always with the same cast.

I wish to tell the House and ratepayers that an extra £1·1 billion is available this year. More than £250 million of that is not being claimed by authorities. For example, the London borough of Ealing has claimed only £51·6 million grant, whereas £72·7 million is available under the settlement, so it is losing £21·1 million in grant. Again, the London borough of Waltham Forest is claiming only £65·2 million whereas £75·5 million is available and thus is losing £10·3 million. Outside London, Cleveland is claiming only £90·4 million whereas £102 million is available.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister implying that all that the boroughs need to do is to send a postcard to the Minister to have the money? Is he not being uncharacteristically disingenuous? Those boroughs cannot have the money because of the level at which their budgets have been set. If they reduced their budgets to the point at which they could have the money, they would have to sack many teachers.

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman has suggested that the boroughs send a postcard—we shall await the arrival of that postcard. It all depends what is said on the back of it. That is the magic method. The card does not need invisible ink, or even my quotation from Ecclesiastes. It should say merely, "We have seen the truth; we are now spending at settlement; we are reformed characters, and we shall be counting the money in the cellars and dungeons of the Department of the Environment."

The aggregate of grant not claimed by Cleveland is £11·6 million. Overall, whereas £12,775 million is being claimed now, local authorities could have had £13,025 million if they had filled up their postcards at the right time and in the right way.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Only by sacking people.

Dr. Boyson: I do not think so. It is a pleasure to have the hon. Gentleman here. He and I have served many times on Committees considering education Bills and other Bills. The reports of the Audit Commission make many suggestions on how to save money without sacking anyone. If the boroughs sent a postcard asking for extra copies of the Audit Commission's suggestions, we would send them some.

Why are ratepayers in some areas losing the benefit of Government grant? The answer is that those authorities, and many others that are controlled by the Opposition or which are under no overall control—and others under the control of other Opposition parties, such as that of which the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) is the only representative present—have put up their spending well above the rate of inflation. Ealing, for example, has done so by 14·6 per cent., Waltham Forest by 12·3 per cent. and Cleveland by 10 per cent. The settlement provided for a 5·25 per cent. increase in current expenditure, which is well above the likely level of inflation of 4·5 per cent. Local authorities as a whole have planned to spend 7·3 per cent. more than last year, and are consequently losing their grant. The cost to the ratepayers in Ealing is a local rate rise of 71·8 per cent. instead of 12 per cent. Ratepayers in Waltham Forest face a local rate increase of 67·2 per cent. instead of 11 per cent., and those in Cleveland one of 7·2 per cent. instead on 2·1 per cent.

The full £9,015 million block grant that is made available by the supplementary report is not being claimed because of the high spending policies of authorities controlled by the Labour party, the alliance or those without overall control. I urge such councils to think again, to make savings and to reap the rewards of the grant that is available.

Some authorities seem to do less well than others in grant terms out of the mechanism that we have adopted for injecting the Exchequer's contribution to the extra cost of schoolteachers' pay, about which the hon. Member for Blackburn asked me a question. This point is an important one. The principle underlying the rate support grant system is the equalisation of needs and resources. It aims, subject to certain constraints, to enable authorities to provide services at a standard level at equal poundage cost to their ratepayers. Our aim in increasing provision and block grant in the supplementary report is to enable all education authorities to finance the extra cost of teachers' pay at a broadly equal poundage cost to their ratepayers. That cost is about 4p.

Those education authorities with high pupil numbers in schools, and hence high education GREAs, or with low resources, can raise only a small proportion of the extra cost of teachers' pay by levying 4p. Such authorities get larger amounts of extra grant. Others, which have smaller numbers of pupils in schools, and hence smaller education GREAs, or higher rateable resources, can raise a much larger proportion of what they need to finance the extra cost of teachers' pay by levying 4p. They receive smaller amounts of extra grant. The result is equitable at the ratepayer level.

The report makes two other changes, both small by comparison with teachers' pay. It revises GREAs to take account of later information on capital allowances for personal social services and waste disposal that was not available in December, when the first report was made. It also takes account of boundary changes that took place on 1 April 1986 and 1 April 1987.

As I have said, the report is largely concerned with providing the extra money for the increase in teachers' pay, and I commend it to the House.

6.20 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Minister began by quoting Ecclesiastes and said that this was the fourth rate support grant report that had been debated in as many weeks. Two weeks have elapsed during which we have not met across the Chamber or across the Committee Table. However, we meet with increasing frequency elsewhere because both of us are rising in the ratings put out by the television companies. We have had two weeks during

which there has not been a debate across the Table and I was beginning to suffer withdrawal symptoms for want of such a report.

A revealing statement is contained in paragraph 18 on page 3 of the report:

"This Report is laid before the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for the Environment in accordance with Part VI of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, as amended by Part VI of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, the Local Government Act 1985, the Education Act 1986, the Rate Support Grants Act 1986, the Local Government Finance Act 1987 and the Rate Support Grants Act 1987."

That apparently innocent paragraph tells its own story about the chaos into which the Government have plunged the present system of rate support grant. I gather that the Minister does not have a copy of the report. If he wishes to borrow mine, I shall happily lend it to him.

Forty-three Bills have been brought forward in the two Parliaments of this Conservative Administration, and far from each Bill clarifying the law, each one has made the present system less workable and less fair. As the Minister has said, the principal purpose of this supplementary report is to finance the teachers' pay settlement. If it financed that settlement fairly between all authorities, we would have no hesitation in supporting it, just as we supported the previous Bill. However, the report works very unfairly for some authorities. I know the technical reasons why it works unfairly, but that does not alter the fact that four authorities are faced with the same percentage increase in the pay bill for teachers as that faced by every other education authority.

Those four authorities receive nothing like justice or equity in terms of the contribution from central Government. Hounslow faces an increased pay bill of £2,044,000 towards which it gets the paltry sum of £53,000 by way of additional grant. Newcastle has an additional pay bill of £2,383,000, towards which it gets the trivial sum of £189,000. The Inner London education authority faces an increased pay bill of £20·5 million. It receives not a penny piece extra towards what is, on any calculation, a major additional item.

We debated this matter in considerable detail in Committee on the Local Government Bill, which I gather will not now receive Royal Assent this side of the election. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State says he has information that we will have an October election. If he were as keen on the Bill as we were led to believe, he would have laid it before the House last week or a week or two before that, and he and I would not have withdrawal symptoms about the absence of a debate. *[Interruption.]* I am told that it is scheduled for the week after next. We look forward to that debate with great interest.

The Minister may say that I am being partisan in supporting ILEA, Hounslow and Newcastle because, as I recall, they are all Labour authorities. However, Richmond is controlled by the Liberal party.

Dr. Boyson: It is a Lib-Lab pact.

Mr. Straw: Richmond has never been on any of our target lists and we do not believe that the advent of the next Labour Government will depend on success in Richmond.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Gentleman will have a long time to wait.

Mr. Straw: We would have a long time to wait if we depended on Richmond. I do not think that we won Richmond even in 1945. Richmond is in a worse position than any of the three Labour authorities that I mentioned. As I told the Minister, Richmond has an additional pay bill for teachers of £971,000. It will lose grant to the tune of £81,000. There is no equity whatever in that. I am grateful, as I am sure Richmond and the other three authorities are, to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities for preparing these calculations and for drawing them to our attention.

When the Under-Secretary winds up, he will have to explain to ratepayers in Richmond why an increase in the pay bill that is apparently to be financed partly through the generosity of Government will lead to a decrease in rate support grant and therefore to an overall net cost of £81,000. I know that the system is supposed to be mad, but it should not be that mad and the Minister should have used one of his multipliers to adjust the position for Richmond and the other authorities.

We heard a good deal from the Minister when he went into the part of his speech prepared by Conservative Central Office rather than by his officials. We had the bit prepared by Church house at the beginning of his speech — the prayer. He finished up with the bit from Conservative Central Office about so-called profligate authorities. The Minister ought to be clear about which tune he is playing, because Conservative Members usually play two tunes at the same time about education spending, and they jar.

On the one hand, as the Prime Minister has done, Conservative Members complain that Labour authorities are large spenders. On the other hand, they go around the country praising their record on education spending. I should like to quote from the Prime Minister's unsuccessful letter to Mr. Neil Balfour, the Conservative candidate in Ryedale dated 3 April 1986:

"In education too this Government has a better record than any other. More money is being spent per pupil than ever before."

Why is more money being spent? More money per pupil is being spent than ever before because Labour authorities, and authorities in which there is no overall control, have had to ignore Government instructions to cut spending and, in order to meet the needs in their areas, they have increased spending. The record shows that to be the case.

In successive public expenditure White Papers, the Government planned to cut spending per pupil in real terms from £706 in 1980-81 to £674 in 1985-86. These are in constant 1979-80 prices. However, expenditure has gone up from £687 to £741. The Government planned to cut expenditure by 3·8 per cent. in real terms, but expenditure has risen by 8 per cent. in real terms. What is the Minister saying? Is he saying that this increase in spending which the Prime Minister now praises should not have occurred? If he is not saying that, he has to accept that that spending had to be financed. It has had to be financed by way of rate increases, because the Government have refused adequately to increase rate support grant to pay for those authorities' spending plans. We heard from the Minister about the increase in spending by some authorities.

The Minister complained that in Ealing the increase in expenditure was 14·3 per cent., in Cleveland the increase was 10 per cent. and in another authority it was 7·3 per cent. He and his colleague, the Under-Secretary, know that they answered a parliamentary question only last weekend in which I asked Ministers to rank the increase in spending of authorities this year compared with last

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financial year. It is a very revealing table because, of the 17 local councils that have increased their spending by 50 per cent. or more in 1987-88 over 1986-87, 14 are Conservative-controlled and not one is Labour-controlled.

So which authorities are profligate and which provide value for money? When will we hear the Minister complain that Conservative-held Brentwood has increased its spending by 655 per cent.—certainly a world record—in a single year? When will one word of criticism about that pass the Minister's lips?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): Will the hon. Gentleman make it clear whether by spending he is referring to total expenditure or to current expenditure? Most hon. Members would assume that he is referring to current expenditure, which is the normally accepted increase in spending. Will he confirm that he is referring to total expenditure, which is often notional expenditure for grant purposes and which is subject to wide variations depending on the use of special accounts?

Mr. Straw: The Under-Secretary sensibly knows the answer, or he wisely would not have asked the question. The table that I think he, rather than his colleague, the Minister, provided for me was ranked for certain increases in total expenditure for 1986-7 to 1987-88. He provided those figures. If he felt that they gave a wholly inaccurate account of the authorities, he could have provided another set of tables. The Minister ought to look at alternative figures and, if he prepares further tables, I will be happy to receive them.

Of the 17 authorities that increased their spending by over 50 per cent., if 14 of those had been Labour authorities and if one of those had increased its expenditure by 655 per cent., we would never have heard the last of it. I daresay that we also would not have heard the last of it from *The Sun*. It would have been blazoned across the top of the newspaper.

As they are all Conservative-controlled authorities, everybody is quiet about it. Rutland increased its spending by 173 per cent., Melton increased its spending by 153 per cent., and so it goes on—in places such as Windsor and Maidenhead, which increased its spending by 77 per cent. and St. Albans, which is now alliance-controlled since the Chancellor of the Exchequer's private secretary got to work in the area. Bath increased its spending by 64 per cent.; Oadby and Wigston increased its expenditure by 60 per cent.; Chelmsford—alliance-controlled—increased its spending by 58 per cent.; Charnwood increased its spending by 61 per cent.; Wansdyke increased its spending by 51 per cent.; and Castle Point down in Essex, another good Conservative area, increased its spending by 50 per cent.

As the Minister and the Under-Secretary will recognise, these figures provide some relevant indication of increases in spending. The much maligned Waltham Forest, for example, on total expenditure, not on relevant expenditure, which the Minister was quoting, is proposing to increase its spending by 19·2 per cent., compared with 19·9 per cent. by adjoining Conservative Epping. One could go on and on. If one went on far enough, one would find that the efficient Labour-controlled borough of Blackburn has an increase in total expenditure of only 2·2 per cent. The borough of Copeland is planning a reduction in total expenditure of 1·8 per cent.

Over the last eight years, the Government have plunged the system of rate support grant into chaos. They have also cut the grant that goes from the taxpayer to the ratepayer by £18,000 million, which is £1,300 for every family in the land. It is because of the cuts in rate support grant by this Conservative Administration that rates have risen twice as fast as inflation. The spending record of local authorities, Labour, Liberal and Conservative, is better than that of central Government. Local authorities as a whole have increased their spending by less than that of central Government, but rates have gone up because of the Government's cuts in the support which they have given to the ratepayer.

To twist the knife further, should Ministers be re-elected, they are planning to compound the chaos and inequity of the last eight years by introducing a poll tax. I am glad that at least the Prime Minister, in answering questions today, referred to this by its proper name, the poll tax, and not by the euphemism "community charge" dreamed up in the Department of the Environment.

The poll tax will lead to swingeing increases in what families pay. It will lead to major increases in local tax bills for average families in all the metropolitan areas—in urban Lancashire, in Cumbria, in Durham and in inner London. The Prime Minister today suggested that the poll tax would be the greatest in areas which had Labour-controlled councils. That is simply untrue. As the Government's figures suggest, there is no area where there will be a greater increase in bills paid by average families than in the London borough of Wandsworth. The average rate bill at present is £185 per adult and that will increase by no less than 115 per cent. to £397 per adult.

Mr. Chope: ILEA, not Wandsworth.

Mr. Straw: The Under-Secretary says from a sedentary position that that is ILEA. ILEA exists at the moment. The ILEA rate is levied across London at the moment, as he knows very well. ILEA has not been invented simply to increase the burden on ratepayers in Wandsworth. It is a constant; it is there now and it will be there after the general election. The reason why the local tax bill will double in Wandsworth is because of the crazy position of the poll tax that Ministers have proposed and with which the Under-Secretary is saddled.

I know that he had nothing to do with the original decision to introduce it and I daresay that he would like the whole system torn up. He would be mad if he does not think that. If he wants to rise and tell me that he thinks it is a wonderful system in Wandsworth, where it will be doubled, I will give way.

Mr. Chope: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what the effect in Blackburn would be of his party's proposals for capital value taxation and some magic regional formula?

Mr. Straw: I will not, except to say that any change in capital valuations would take place over a long period and would have only a marginal impact upon ratepayers. As the Under-Secretary would know if he studied the matter, a move to capital values need not necessarily lead to any change in relative rate bills provided that proper adjustments are made in the transfer to capital values.

The idea that a move to capital values will lead to the sort of swingeing disruption in the bills that people pay at

present is quite untrue, as the hon. Gentleman's own internal exemplifications ought to show. They take place over a long period. The idea of capital values is simply that present domestic rate bills are based upon rental values which are now of only notional worth.

In the days that the Minister remembers, in Lancashire at least, the objective was to live in one house and own two others, as he told us in Committee. In those days, 90 per cent. of people lived in houses that they did not own and there was an active market in private rented housing that was not controlled. Therefore, the rental values set by rating officers had a direct relationship to the natural rental values that people had to pay and, through those, there was a direct relationship with the capital value, just as with business rates. Business rates are based upon rental values, but they could easily be based upon capital values, because the two are directly connected.

We know that, for all sorts of reasons, a free rental market for private housing does not and cannot exist because it is the aspiration of most people in the country and of all parties that people should live in homes that they own. Therefore, it is sensible to move to the value of the houses as properly reflected in capital values. As I said —the Minister will know this, since he has studied the matter — a change to capital values, while a sensible technical change, would not lead to any disruption or significant changes in the amount that individual families were paying.

I noticed that the Minister did not say that the poll tax was a wonderful idea. He will know from Mr. Chris Mockler, an adviser to the previous Secretary of State, that the poll tax was dreamed up by Ministers in a panic just before a Conservative party conference to get themselves out of a hole. As Mr. Mockler has told an interested British public, that was one of the rare occasions when a Conservative party conference actually influenced Conservative Government policy. It shows how sensible Ministers have been in the past to ensure that Conservative party conferences do not influence Conservative policy, because it leads the party into cul de sacs and unpopular policies such as this.

Even in the areas where the poll tax will not lead to an increase in average local tax bills, it will hit a great number of families very hard. It will certainly hit the poor. The poor widow who at the moment gets a 100 per cent. rebate on her rates will be paying a poll tax, albeit at 20 or 25 per cent. of the total. Ministers will rue the day that they were ever committed to the poll tax.

The report is principally about the teachers' pay settlement. It is also about other matters. We oppose it because, once again, it highlights the unfairness of the present system of block grant. Although we want the Government to be paying their fair contribution to the teachers' pay settlement, we do not think that it is fair that in many areas the Government are not paying a reasonable contribution and in some areas are paying nothing.

6.42 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): As on previous occasions, when Opposition Front Bench spokesmen speak on rate support grant and the present system with its complications, one would think that there had been a wonderful golden day in rate support grant when everyone understood the system and it was straightforward and uncomplicated. I have to admit that I cannot recall such a day. When I was the leader of a council we had regression analysis and that left everybody totally dumbfounded. Everybody felt that that was so unfair and it was from that that all the changes have stemmed. There never was a golden day. I believe that it is beyond the wit of man to devise a system in which one can give central Government aid to 450 local authorities with so many multipliers and factors built in that take account of all the individual circumstances that would please all the people all of the time. It is not possible. Therefore, whatever system is devised, it will be subject to objections.

If we are to have local government, a substantial part of the spending by local authorities has to be raised by whatever form of local taxation is available. If one is to fund more and more from central Government, one has to ask the basic question; why have local government at all? If it is not responsible for raising the money but only for spending it, we would be better with a prefectorial system such as that in France. If one does not require local government to raise the greater part of its money and be responsible to the people for the spending of that money, one would inevitably end up with the situation in which central Government would dictate more and more of the policies. That would follow as night follows day.

Under the Conservative control of Nottingham city council back in 1976-79 — those were the days of Labour's high inflation when it was rocketing away to 25 per cent. — the rates in Nottingham were held steady. Since the Labour party took control in Nottingham, we have not stopped watching the rates spiral and increase. Indeed, from 1979 to the present they have risen virtually fourfold. I am talking about the city and council rate combined. There is a cause and effect between one's policies and what one spends money on and the effect upon the ratepayer.

The subject of community charges has been mentioned. In Nottinghamshire that will mean that the business community rate will be cut by 17 per cent. That will be good for jobs in Nottinghamshire. Homes in which there are two adults will be better off and some homes in which there are three adults will be better off and some will be worse off. It is only when one gets to four people in a house that people start to be demonstrably worse off. I still think that the change is defensible in terms of sheer justice. We have reached the point where rates are totally indefensible as a system. Opinions may differ as to what should be substituted but I have not noticed anyone willing to stand in the last ditch and defend the present rating system. *[Interruption.]*

The Labour party wants to switch to capital values. No one is willing to defend the rates, for a very good reason: they are totally indefensible on any basis whatsoever.

The point has been made about the unfairness of judgments during the course of the year. Supplementary grants sometimes work unfairly and to the disbenefit of one council. In Nottinghamshire last year the county council did not use any of the extra money for the relief of the ratepayers. It was stashed away in the bank to be used to lower rates in this election year. I do not complain about that; all is fair in politics and war. However, one cannot take a moral position and say that that is all terribly unfair when the boot is on the other foot.

In Nottingham city this year the rate was decreased by a vote at the final council rate budget meeting. It was decreased because the Conservatives, and one Labour councillor who had the courage to vote with them, voted

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to stop the insanity of some of the policies into which the money was being poured. They really were loony left policies, as they have been called, in the worst sense. In the Nottingham city council elections the Conservatives have pledged to get rid of the worst of those policies. They have to go. Even some members of the Labour party in Nottingham believe that.

The problems of the Labour party in Nottingham, indeed in my own constituency, have been the subject of some newspaper articles recently and I am not surprised. That is the latest stage of what seems to be a lemming-like rush to destruction by the Labour party in various parts of the country where it has become disassociated, not only from the electorate but from large parts of its own party. One stands in bemused amazement at the antics that take place occasionally. I suspect that in Nottinghamshire on Thursday we shall start to see the chickens come home to roost in a big way.

Spending per se—one has to get this message across—is not necessarily good. Compassion is not necessarily measured in spending terms. One has to ask, is the spending really necessary and if it is, are we getting value for money? The complaint about Labour councils and some of the things they have done, even where they are defensible as being nice ideas if not really necessary, is that they have spiralled out of control. That happens all too often.

I had 10 years as leader of the local council, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope). We were in neighbouring boroughs and learnt certain basic lessons about political and management control from that experience. One of those lessons was to sometimes be doubtful about the advice one receives from officers, because they will always be interested in building their own empires. The complaint of officers to local government members, all too often, is that members are not interested in the locality; they are interested in their political dogma. The politician's reply must be that that is just as true of the officers. The peer group they look to is not the good of the borough they are serving but their own professional interest groups. Those professional interest groups measure an officer's effectiveness by how much money he gets to spend. They are all in competition to outbid each other. If local politicians are not bright enough to stop them, they will build empires endlessly. They have done it in boroughs up and down the country.

I mentioned that at the rates meeting one Labour councillor had the courage to vote against some of the more lunatic policies. Another Labour councillor the other day discovered a racial questionnaire in the housing department in Nottingham and the chief executive is holding an inquiry into that. Unfortunately, this is the pattern more and more with Labour-controlled councils up and down the country.

A point was made in the Nottingham *Evening Post* the other day that lack of success for the alliance in Nottinghamshire was easily explained; both the Conservative and the Labour parties were moderate and there was nowhere for the Alliance to make a stand, but that is becoming less true with the turn the Labour party has made. I suspect that that is absolutely right. We shall see on Thursday what the result is and I suspect that we shall see it in another election shortly.

Any fool can spend money; the trick is getting value for money and questioning everything behind the spending. That is much more difficult. The charge against Labour councils concerns not just their policies but their management control. They suspect that good management is some kind of Tory conspiracy, so they throw out all controls and the spending runs out of control.

It was said 11 years ago by a Labour Secretay of State that the party was over. That is all too true, but many in authority in Labour councils do not accept that. Sooner or later either they will have to accept it or they will be swept from power. It will be one or the other; it is their judgment. I think I know what will happen on Thursday, certainly in my locality.

6.53 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I was interested to note in the introduction to the supplementary report that, before making this report and determining the amount available for grants, the Secretary of State consulted with associations of local authorities that "appeared to him" to be concerned and any local authority with which consultation "appeared to him" to be desirable. For the alliance this spells out exactly the problem—that, in the last analysis, everything is left to the Secretary of State. Each twist and turn in the Government's long and tortuous attempt to sort out the rate support grant simply emphasises the inadequacy of central control over local decision-making.

The Government have long since dropped the principle of local people deciding what to spend. Now the Secretary of State is grabbing all power over teachers' pay, but leaving local authorities with most of the burden and with the consequences of a demoralised teaching profession; a teaching profession with a new resentment for government; local authorities having to cut back to foot the Government's bill.

The alliance welcomes the pay award for teachers as a good step in the right direction, but we would still like to see more money provided for school resources, books, classrooms and so on, many of which are in poor condition. We would also like teachers to have full negotiating rights for teachers' pay awards. If these priorities are accepted, along with the many other priorities of local government, we must tackle local needs by moving back to a system that allows people to decide their own priorities locally.

The greatest problem with this proposal is that the centrally agreed pay settlement for teachers is not backed up by central finance to local authorities. Whilst the supplement previously given by the Government amounted to only 46 per cent. of expected expenditure, after this report the supplement will be equivalent to only 41 per cent. That is because the Government do not cover the pay settlement in real terms, so 5 per cent. will have to come out of local budgets from elsewhere. That will mean a reduction in services to the already over-burdened ratepayers, equivalent to the cost to county councils of, on average, £500,000 each. For example, the Government are now providing in Cheshire only 40 per cent. of the extra cost, instead of the 46·3 per cent. which was the original rate support grant for 1987-88, so the council has to cover the cost of that average figure of £500,000. There are far worse examples than that, because the burden is not being spread evenly.

No matter what the Minister says, it would be hard for anybody who looks at this to say that there has been an equitable distribution. How can it be equitable to burden the Inner London education authority with an extra £20 million or more of expenditure, yet provide nothing at all to meet that? How can it be equitable to cut support for the Richmond authority, which is faced with increased wage costs? This has occurred at a time when councils have set their budgets and cannot easily revise their budgets or increase the rates, so they are likely to be further penalised for increased over-spending.

The conclusion we draw from that is that local people must have the right to make their own decisions. Most local authorities have people who suffer from the plight of homelessness and the authorities would, if given the option, increase spending on this but the grant-related expenditure has gone down from £262 million in 1986-87 to £187 million in 1987-88. That will further restrict councils in providing the adequate housing their ratepayers are demanding, yet the Government lay the blame not at their own doorstep but at the doorstep of those local authorities.

It is even more ludicrous that while we are now settling the accounts for 1987-88, the Government have not yet settled 1986-87. If we have a general election soon—it seems, by the absence of Members from the Benches that something is in the offing—clearly it will be the summer before councils receive the supplement for the teachers' pay settlement for 1986-87. The Minister has talked in general terms about bringing forward proposals in June. Why are they not here already? The answer is that, once again, this ludicrous and over-complicated system means that councils cannot clear up their finances for a period that has already passed. How are those authorities meant to run efficiently when £50 million is missing indefinitely?

At the start of the debate a generalised attack was made on some local authorities. All that that attack did was to take the figures without any insight, knowledge or attention to the difficulties that local authorities face on the ground. That highlights the problem of the way we have divorced local expenditure in local government from local control. We must look at local government block grants and the way the rating system works. Above all, the Government should stand condemned as a cause of confusion and obstruction to local government and local democracy.

For example, a paper drawn up by Cornwall county council last month said:

"The grant system must now be seen as beyond the comprehension of many people dealing with it and the past year has seen a string of errors and confusions."

The system has become so complicated that the very basis of local government, whereby local people bring local knowledge to decision-making at a local level, is undermined because they can no longer even understand the system within which they are trying to work, or the budget system which they are asked to operate. That undermines the principle of local control by elected councillors, representative of local people in Government. It allows the Government to confuse the issues by blaming the cuts and the rate increases, not on themselves but on the local authorities that are merely subject to the Government's whims.

A mainframe computer is needed to begin to understand how relevant are issues such as roads, population and unemployment to the determination of support, particularly in an area such as Cornwall. We heard earlier of "notional expenditure for grant purposes" having no real relevance to the grant itself. What a ludicrous system which leads us to come up with such phrases. I am sure that the Prime Minister would not attempt to run a grocer's shop in that way.

The principle of rate support grant reports means that the Secretary of State may ignore information about expenditure and make different assumptions for different authorities, or even do so just on descriptions and hearsay. If there is any epitaph for the Government, it is centralisation of power and the removal of all but the last vestiges of local government control. That is the case either because local power has been removed in its entirety or because it is simply impossible any longer to exercise. That is compounded by the frequent changes, which cause constant problems for those councils.

Cornwall county council fixed the rate for 1987-88 on the basis of the Government's firm intentions for the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88. The rate support grant order was finally published and approved in late March, more than two months later than the usual timetable. At one stage during that process Cornwall was informed by the regional office of the Department of the Environment in Bristol that it would lose £1 million of the grant in 1986-87 only to have that statement withdrawn within the hour and the loss to become a gain of £94,000.

The system is so haphazard that no commercial concern would be run in such a manner. If it were, it would probably be liquidated. Certainly the audit would be refused. Therefore, we need to introduce comprehensive and fundamental reforms. We hear nothing of that from the Labour Benches. The Labour party sticks with the rates system, fiddles with the figures a little, tries to alter things once again and only increases our confusion and doubts about the system.

All we get from the Government is a proposal for a poll tax. Last time that was suggested it caused a peasants' revolt and it will cause a revolt again among ratepayers. It is inequitable and unfair and will be rejected. That is why the alliance alone is coming up with radical alternative proposals for basing local expenditure on people's ability to pay. We shall introduce a local income tax that directly relates people's ability to pay to the amount that they are asked to pay. Moreover, we shall move beyond that to create genuine local democracy and the genuine local control of authorities by changing the absurd electoral system to genuine community representation through local proportional representation.

If the Government or the Labour party were serious about controlling the abuses of local authorities or controlling the militants within their own parties, they would accept that the best way in which to make local government representative of the people would be to introduce proportional representation.

Mr. Straw: At what average rate would such a local income tax be set? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the income which domestic rates produce nationally means that the average local income tax would have to be set at about 8p in the pound?

Mr. Taylor: We would set a local income tax locally on the basis of what needs to be spent. Surely the hon. Gentleman would accept that it is far better for people to pay according to their means than according to some

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rough and ready estimate through rates or a poll tax. I believe that such a system has the support of the British people.

We are proposing to return local democracy to the hands of the local people. The best way to tackle local problems is to let local people tackle them and to give them the resources to do so. Of course funds will be needed to help those areas that are so starved of income that they are unable to meet their needs. That is why we would have an equalisation fund. But that would be to help local democracy, not hinder it; to make it clear how local democracy can operate, not obscure it.

Our proposals are about giving local control back to local people. I draw Conservative Members' attention to the thoughts of Disraeli who said that centralisation is the death blow of democracy. That is our belief and that is why we would return control to people in their own community.

7.6 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): It is easy to say what one would do without saying how one would do it. The local tax, described by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), has been considered. The hon. Gentleman talked about people who could pay more paying more, and those who could not paying less, but it is usually those in the areas of greatest need who are not capable of paying. Therefore, Government funding is needed to overcome the imbalance in the needs of various local authorities.

We have talked about the north-south divide. Portsmouth, an area at which I look frequently because my son lives there, has high wages and a large number of people who are earning. Their ability to pay far exceeds their needs. In my area, with low wages and high unemployment, the needs are greater, yet there is no way in which, on the Liberals' policy, we could raise that money. It would be impossible.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: We accept the need for an equalisation fund based precisely on the criteria outlined by the hon. Gentleman. Not everywhere has the same income levels to generate the support that would be needed. What we must get away from is the ludicrous and complicated system that the Government are offering us.

Mr. McKay: If we talk about an equalisation fund, we must ask where the money for it will come from. People will not look favourably at a system which takes a little extra from them in order to pay for what somebody else needs without their having some say in it. I understand the ideas, but putting them into effect needs a lot more thought.

Rates are a local tax. If they are looked at as an income tax rather than as a tax people would probably understand them more. The problem is to find the right formula. You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that many people have spent many years looking for the right formula. Finding a suitable rating system is like finding the Holy Grail—we have looked for it but we have not found it. Unfortunately, the Government's approach will make things very much worse. Under the Government's proposed poll tax, my constituents would pay 65 per cent. more in rates than at present, which would place many households in great difficulty.

There is something wrong with the system and with the formula and I would be failing in my duty to my constituents if I did not speak today. The present formula does not overcome the problems in my area, where it is four or five years out of date. It makes Barnsley look like a shire county, which it most certainly is not. There has to be something wrong with a system that works like that. It works against the area. We are having difficulty in trying to promote a new image now that heavy industries such as coal and steel have disappeared because of the Government's policies. While the wealth-making capacity of heavy industry has gone, the legacy remains, but we have nothing to make up for that lost spending power and to overcome our difficulties. That is why we need to examine the system again. However, a poll tax would not solve the problem.

I ask the Minister a straight question: if he brings in a poll tax, how will the water rate be calculated? At present, it is calculated on the valuation of a property. If we do not calculate the rates on the valuation of a property, how are we to calculate the water rates? How will the water authorities get their money—or have the Government decided to introduce compulsory water metering——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: And sewage meters.

Mr. McKay: As my hon. Friend says, and sewage meters.

There is also a line in the report that refers to payments for the environment. How are those payments to be calculated? People could not afford the standing charge for water meters. If water were metered, the largest families, who are usually the poorest, would be penalised, unless, that is, there was a water rebate. But the Government do not like rebates, so that is not likely to happen.

It seems ironic that we should be debating a Bill which, the Minister says, will give teachers more pay when we have not yet debated the teachers' pay and conditions order. If we passed a Bill that gave teachers more pay and yet turned down the teachers' pay and conditions order, local authorities would get a windfall. But there is no fear of that happening, because of the Government's majority.

Barnsley education authority has produced a very good report which says that, as has been widely reported in the newspapers, Barnsley has the highest proportion of children who do not stay at school after the age of 16. That creates a problem in trying to introduce new industries. The report also says that the area has the worst results. That is not because of the teachers, or the way in which the schools are run or the curriculum; it is because of our area and our environment and because people used to be encouraged to leave school as early as they could—at 14 — so that they could contribute financially to the household. That attitude seems to have nearly disappeared, but we must overcome the problem.

Barnsley education authority has the best record for people entering adult education. People leave school at 16 but then take up adult education. It appears that people want to get away from the school atmosphere but come back to education later. That is why we need to look closely at tertiary education. I have changed my attitude on that. I believed that sixth forms should be attached to schools. That is evidently no longer feasible, so we need money to finance alternatives. The only way to get that money is through the rates, yet if we try to increase the rates, we are rate-capped. It is a never-ending process.

Local councillors are battling against the problem and I admire them for the hours that they put in and the work that they do. However, they need help to get on with the job.

As the Minister knows, because I have talked to him about it, the South Yorkshire fire service has spent all its contingency fund and is now broke. We asked whether the Government would consider that in next year's allocation. Perhaps a Labour Minister will take up the matter where the Government have left off. I therefore ask the Minister to put it on record that the South Yorkshire service will need more money next year so that the matter is passed on quickly and is not lost in the machinery.

7.16 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) ended his remarks in the spirit of optimism shared by all Labour Members — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may regret their laughter in the next few weeks. We are not fooled by the opinion polls, and I am surprised that intelligent young men such as the hon. Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) are fooled.

I share my hon. Friend's concern about the taxation of water and the methods that will be used to calculate it. The Secretary of State gave what appears to have been an off-the-record briefing, in which he said that, in the event of a Conservative victory in the general election, water metering and privatisation would go ahead. The Government have spent nearly £1·5 million during the past year trying to sort out the morass of legal and financial problems involved in privatising the water industry. I suspect that if the Conservatives came back to power, privatisation would be on the agenda again but that it would be resisted as strongly as it has been resisted in the past. I am confident that those in Britain who rose against the proposals last time would do so again.

As the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, the first supplementary report for 1987-88 distributes the additional rates support grant of £183 million in respect of teachers' pay restructuring. My hon. Friend mentioned the effect on Newcastle. It is worth underlining the fact that for Newcastle, in the north-east—the area in which I live, and an area of massive deprivation as a result of unemployment and other factors imposed on it by the Government—the estimated cost of the pay award will be £2·383 million, while the additional grant will be only £189,000. I hope that the Minister will realise the inequity of that. I hope that he will consider, too, the other authorities listed by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn. The Minister should examine the situation and ensure that the authorities that have been caught in that trap are adequately compensated.

It is unfair that a local authority such as Newcastle has to deal with something that has been deliberately stirred up by the Government—an unwarranted attack on the teaching profession, an honourable group of professionals dedicated to educating our young people, often in the most difficult of circumstances, with poor facilities and a lack of materials. They are educating students who are facing hopelessness in areas of deprivation and high unemployment.

The Government deliberately chose confrontation rather than conciliation with the teaching unions. They chose to remove negotiating rights on salaries and conditions. They used their hefty majority to drive the legislation through Parliament. If the news items today to which I have been listening are correct, later this evening the Secretary of State for Education and Science will announce a change. If he does and if he restores the democratic rights of teachers and their unions, I shall welcome it 100 per cent. But some important questions must be asked.

If the right hon. Gentleman is to restore those rights so quickly after taking them away, why did he take them away in the first place? Is not this change a simple bit of cynical electioneering to attract the votes of school teachers? It is clear that a general election is sharpening the minds of a number of Secretaries of State. Last week, the Secretary of State for the Environment stopped the exploratory drilling in the constituencies of four Conservative Members. Many of my hon. Friends and I suspect that that had something to do with an event that could take place within the next month or so.

Dr. Boyson: Impossible.

Mr. Boyes: The Minister says that that is impossible, but he is wrong. If I were advising the Government, I should say that they should wait a little longer. But it is not for me to advise the Government. If they want to stick their neck out and get it chopped off in the next few weeks, so be it.

I believe that the teachers will see through this cynical electioneering and will neither forget nor forgive easily. They will well understand that the Government who are prepared on one occasion to take away their rights will just as easily take them away again if they are returned with a large majority. Teachers should take the Government's action as a warning that the powers that the Secretary of State can take in a Government with a huge majority are enormous. The right hon. Gentleman has demonstrated that he is prepared to use those powers in a negative way, affecting the education of our youngsters. Teachers realise that. The Secretary of State has betrayed the trust of the teachers. The Government do not deserve any votes from teachers the length and breadth of this country.

Despite the present imposed pay award, the teachers are still badly underpaid in view of the importance of the tasks that they carry out. Many other workers in the public sector will note carefully the way in which the Secretary of State took away the teacher unions' negotiating rights, the way in which, for cynical electioneering, he will make his statement later, and, above all, the fact that, if he can do it to the teachers, he or other Secretaries of State, or whoever heads the Departments, can do it to other public sector workers. Negotiating rights between employers and trade unions are the essential rights of a democratic system. All public sector workers are being warned: if the Government are returned with a working majority, wages and conditions could easily be settled by legislation in Parliament and not by negotiations outside Parliament.

We are concerned with not only the Government's attitudes towards teachers but the entire role of local authorities. The one thing that we can say about the Government's attitude to local government is that it has increased uncertainty. More than 40 pieces of legislation directly affecting local government have been introduced by the Government since they took office in 1979. That has greatly affected the officers and members of councils and the people whom they represent. Some of the legislation,

[Mr. Boyes]

in the morass that the Secretary of State has introduced, was aimed retrospectively to correct legislation that had been demonstrated to be at fault in the courts in actions taken by local authorities to test its legality. The present Secretary of State must have had more legislation taken to court, and findings against him, than any other Secretary of State in modern times.

On 25 March 1987, in the debate on the rate support grant reports for England, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said:

"Since July the right hon. Gentleman has made five announcements affecting grants to councils, and during that time there have been four Acts affecting local government finance. And Ministers have the gall to criticise councils for inefficiency! The Government have demonstrated an unprecedented level of bungling incompetence, and they cannot escape responsibility for the mess." — [*Official Report*, 25 March 1987; Vol. 113, c. 448.]

However, by using Parliament to introduce retrospective legislation, the right hon. Gentleman has made planning in local authorities almost impossible. Of course local authorities prefer to plan, as do businesses, for periods of five, 10 or even 20 years. If the Government stay in power, local authorities will be reduced to the absurdity of planning week by week. Then the use of the word "planning" will become meaningless. It is more a case of muddling through as best they can, as one chief executive said recently.

It is downright criminal that local authorities are in this position. Their services are essential to the vast majority of people. Local authority services have acted as an essential shield against the deprivation and poverty of high unemployment in areas such as the one that I represent in north-east England. No wonder the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said on 18 December 1984 to the then Secretary of State for the Environment:

"Does he further understand, or has anyone advised him, about the housing decay and the infrastructure that decays by the day in our cities? . . . Does he not understand that, if we go on as we are now, with these voodoo economics where we stick pins in all those people who carried out the policies that most of us believed in, we shall have no freedoms left, we shall have no homes left, and we shall have no sound and sane cities left?" — [*Official Report*, 18 December 1984; Vol. 70, c. 170.]

Responsible elected councillors have attempted to provide essential services efficiently and effectively. They are trying to cut through the mass of confusion heaped upon them over the past eight years. The attack on local authorities in an attack on our democratic processes. We have witnessed the extremes to which the Government will go with their decision to abolish a whole tier of local government without consulting the people represented by it—the GLC and the metropolitan councils. Yes, there was an opportunity to test public opinion by holding elections, but the Government abandoned elections. The abolition Bill was the first Bill on which I served, and there was no better experience for a new Member to learn about the Government's attitudes to local authorities. The 200 hours of hard debate in Committee exposed the Government's detestation of, and determination to neuter, the local government system.

Since the abolition of the GLC and the six metropolitan counties, the Government's vitriolic attacks have continued. However, as the Government's economic policies have bitten more deeply into the living standards of the people whom the Labour party represents, the greater has been the need for good local government. The harder the attacks, the more we need sound local government. The more difficult the situation, the greater the need for bodies able to make decisions at a strategic level.

It is a disgrace that London is the only capital in western Europe without its own strategic, directly elected authority. My European experience demonstrates that the United Kingdom is travelling in exactly the opposite direction to that of other European Governments in terms of the size of local authorities. That is why I so strongly support my party's proposal to introduce a regional tier of government. This innovative and exciting proposal will be welcomed by the people, who are aware that central Government are continually increasing power at the centre and yet have demonstrated time and again that they are incapable of managing the power that they are grasping into their hands.

One of the ways that the Government will attempt to reduce local government to a petty irrelevance is by abolishing the present system of rates and introducing a poll tax. The present system of local authority financing needs reform, but a poll tax is far from what is needed. *The Sunday Times* is not one of the favourite newspapers on the Opposition Benches because of the very strong support that newspaper has overtly given to the Government recently. However, on 12 April, 1987 *The Sunday Times* said in an editorial:

"Nothing became modern Toryism less than the idiocies of local grant penalties, targets and rate-capping, interspersed with half-baked ideas of referendums, rates abolition and community charges."

Was it not the Tory Reform Group that said, in a report that it produced in September 1986:

"A poll tax is fair only in the sense that the Black Death was fair. It is indiscriminate, striking young and old, rich and poor, employed and unemployed alike."?

A poll tax will benefit the wealthy on their large properties and will penalise the poor. Figures that have been produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn—and we are grateful for the work that he did on the poll tax analyses—demonstrate this fact most vigorously. It is another element in the Tory philosophy of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

The north-south gap, which has been analysed so much in the last few months as more people have become conscious of the difference, will become even wider. A caring Government will introduce measures to reduce the gap and the inequalities, and to help those in areas of high unemployment, bad housing and environmental decay, instead of doing just the opposite.

How anyone can make sense out of a proposal that leads to a couple, living in a small rundown property in a squalid area, paying the same as someone living in a large grand property in a nice area in the same town is beyond comprehension. How can anyone justify highly paid Cabinet Ministers paying less on their property in the south than low-paid workers in say, Rochdale? How can the Secretary of State for the Environment introduce a half-baked new system—as *The Sunday Times* said—that will reduce his rate bill by about £30 a week when others will be paying more?

It is another example of the Tory rule that it is important to line the pockets of the rich at the expense of others in our society. The Opposiiton want to see a more

equitable society, not a divided society in which some people live in decay in the cities while others live in style and pay less.

The gap between the regions must be reduced. Proposals for a poll tax will not help in any way. Our proposal, which is eminently more attractive and constructive, is to retain the existing rating system based on property but to base the payment on the capital value of homes. This will lead to those living in large executive houses in the exclusive south-east paying more. It would take a few pounds out of the pockets of the Thatcher family, when it settles in Dulwich, rather than putting a few pounds into the pockets of the Thatcher family—a pocket that is well filled already and from which it is well able to pay more.

We believe that local government should be protected from the Tory onslaught. We should provide housing, education, social, recreation and other services at local level. Local people know best and they should be elected to run local authorities and provide services for the people who need them, as they need them. We shall bring forward new policy initiatives, be innovative, tackle deprivation and provide resources to local authorities to carry out these tasks.

We believe in a fundamental democratic process whereby the people have the right to choose which political party has control over their affairs, and the equal right to remove from office any councils that do not provide services at an adequate level and cost. We in the Labour party are the true protectors of local services. We are the true democrats. That is why on Thursday—and in the general election—those who desire to maintain an open democratic society, free from centuries' constraints, will know where to put the crosses on the ballot paper, and that will be at the side of Labour councillors and Members of Parliament.

7.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am sure that we will not agree with the wishful thinking of the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), but we all sympathise with him on the debilitating illness from which he is suffering following his recent return from Nicaragua.

We have had an interesting debate. The more interesting parts of the debate have been where we have ranged further away from the rate support grant supplementary reports and into discussion of proposals being by the different political parties for reforming the rating and grants systems.

Nobody in Southampton would describe the average resident in Itchen as being well-heeled and rich. The average resident in Southampton lives in a house that may cost between £25,000 and £35,000. Those houses are not increasing in value as a result of the decisions of the occupiers, but they are increasing in value far faster than the rate of inflation.

The promises of the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington seem to be to introduce a rating system based upon capital value, which would impinge severely on my constituents. Our proposals for a community charge—not a poll tax, because it will be payable by people beyond those who are registered on the electoral register—in my constituency would result in the burden on a pensioner or a single parent being reduced substantially; the average community charge projected is about £144.

Mr. Straw: As I explained to the Minister in detail, the proposals to move to capital valuations will result in no significant change for the vast majority of ratepayers across the country. The values of houses, whether fixed on a capital basis or any other, would not change week by week or year by year. There would have to be regular revaluations every five years, but it would be nothing like what the Minister has suggested. I should be happy to give him an assurance, since he has expressed such anxiety about the change to capital valuations, that it will make, and need make, virtually no difference at all to his constituents who are living in houses of the kind that he described.

The Minister cannot be allowed to get away with the suggestion that the poll tax will benefit single pensioners. If a single pensioner is on a low income and receiving a supplementary allowance, as a great many are in his area, that single pensioner will pay no rates at all. Under the Minister's system, that single pensioner will pay at least 20 per cent. and probably a great deal more.

Mr. Chope: I notice that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has not put any figures on his proposal. The hon. Gentleman is referring to generalisations, saying that he will switch to a system that is based on rating capital values, when we know that capital values of houses are increasing in different proportions in different areas, wholly unrelated to the income of the occupiers of those houses.

The consequence would be, would it not, if the hon. Gentleman were able to implement his proposals, that those who are struggling to pay for the repairs and maintenance on their houses would have an even greater burden than at present?

Mr. Straw: Has it not occurred to the Minister that by proper adjustment of the rate in the pound and the equalisation grant system there need to be no change in the rate bills that the vast majority of families would pay under the system of capital valuation? It is a technical change, not a change of dramatic social proportions such as the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: We have moved a long way from radical reform if we are now talking about technical change which is not really going to make any difference. We accept the fundamental unfairness of the existing rating system. That is why we are pledged to reform it root and branch.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister has just accepted the fundamental unfairness, but he has also criticised the Labour party proposals as having no relation at all to the income of the occupier. Surely that is fundamentally the problem with his own proposals.

Mr. Chope: No. We have already said quite clearly that there will be a generous rebate system for those who are least able to pay. At the moment, many people on high earnings are paying absolutely nothing towards the cost of local services, and we think that that is unfair.

Mr. Taylor: Would the Minister spell out how those rebates would affect the pensioner who currently pays no rates at all, because they are rebated, and what the position would be after the introduction of poll tax?

Mr. Chope: I am quite prepared to make a very long speech about the details of our proposals, but before I do so I want to answer the questions raised by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and to refer to the proposal for local income tax that he put forward on behalf of the Liberal party.

As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that income tax be determined locally at a level that he is not prepared to disclose, although he did not dispute the suggestion by the hon. Member for Blackburn that it might be 8p in the pound. I have heard suggestions that in some areas it would have to be as high as 13p in the pound, if not higher. That means that, instead of income tax being 27p in the pound, it would shoot up to 40p in some areas. The hon. Member for Truro says in response to that that there would be some sort of equalisation scheme. Surely that is not very different from the scheme that operates at the moment, where income tax and national taxation are contributing something over 50 per cent. towards the cost of local services.

The hon. Member for Truro has been complaining that the way of distributing that money is not as good as it should be, and certainly we are committed to fundamental reform of the grant system and the means by which the grant is distributed. But the Liberal party's policy on local income tax would have a devastating effect upon individuals. Here again, the Liberals are not prepared to spell out the details and expose to public debate the true implications of their policies.

The hon. Member for Truro asked a number of technical questions and referred to the same points as were mentioned by the hon. Member for Blackburn — why Richmond does less well out of this settlement than he would consider equitable and why the Inner London education authority gets no benefit from this supplementary report. I am bound to say that the situation is equitable, and I will seek to explain why.

Richmond is a relatively high-resource authority with relatively low education needs — in other words, its education grant-related expenditure assessment. It can finance the whole of the extra cost of the teachers' pay award at less than the standard increase in poundage. The national standard increase in poundage is about 4p, which ratepayers are expected to provide. The situation, therefore, must be equitable. Indeed, ILEA is better off than many authorities because it can meet the full cost of the settlement at far less than 4p—at 2·3p. That is why it does not get a block grant from this supplementary report.

Hon. Gentlemen who seek to suggest that this supplementary report is distributing grant unfairly are confusing the present system and do not understand it properly. The present system is designed to equalise rate poundages across the country, and that is exactly the effect of this supplementary report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) made an excellent contribution to this debate. I noticed that he was not the only hon. Member representing a Nottingham constituency here. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) is also taking a keen interest in this matter. They quite rightly drew the attention of the House to what has been happening in Nottingham and the spending record in that area, contrasting the performance of the Labour council there with that of Conservative-controlled authorities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East may recall that, when he was leader of Kingston council, in the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, he was able to reduce current expenditure per head in Kingston by 5·8 per cent. in real terms. Closer to his present constituency in Nottingham, we see that Broxtowe council, under Conservative control, has been able to reduce its current expenditure in real terms betwen 1978-79 and 1985-86 by some 16·3 per cent. In Gedling there was a modest increase of 2·8 per cent. and in Rushcliffe a significant reduction of 20·4 per cent., while in Nottingham itself, under the control of the Labour party, there was an increase in current expenditure of 12·5 per cent.—far ahead of anything that can be reasonably justified. My hon. Friend was able to expand further upon the wasteful spending policies of the Labour council there. I look forward with interest to hearing the results after the local elections in Nottingham this coming Thursday.

I would not say that the hon. Member for Blackburn sought to confuse the House, because in response to my intervention he came clean and said that he was talking about total expenditure rather than current expenditure. I am glad that he made that clarification because he knows that total expenditure includes use of special funds. He drew attention to, and sought almost to ridicule, what had been happening in Brentwood. I have to tell him that in Brentwood, in 1985-86, some £2·2 million was taken out of special funds; in 1986-87 some £2·3 million was taken out of special funds; and in the budget for the current year, 1987-88, some £5 million has been added back into the special funds. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the details he will find that the use being made of special funds in that authority is a very large contributory factor to the high increase in total expenditure this year.

Mr. Straw: On the hon. Gentleman's figures, the expenditure has gone up from £1·5 million last year to £11·82 million this year. The Minister has accounted for about half that increase. What has happened to the other half? Is this not exactly the kind of creative accountancy to which he has taken such objection in connection with Labour authorities?

Mr. Chope: We have made no bones about the fact that we feel that the use made by some local authorities of special funds in order to attract more grant has in certain circumstances had a detrimental effect upon other local authorities. That was one reason why we abolished grant recycling, which certainly has prevented the consequences of that having an impact upon other local authorities.

We deprecate the use of special funds where this is effectively an abuse of the conventions of local government, but we are working with a definition of total expenditure that was supported by all the local authority associations and about which the hon. Member for Blackburn and the Opposition in general have not been prepared to make any complaints. Indeed, when at one stage there was a suggestion that we might change the system back, I felt that the hon. Member for Blackburn would have been the first to argue the other way.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) suggested that we were putting the cart before the horse because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is not going to open the debate on the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order until later this evening. The fact is that that order was laid before Parliament on

9 April and came into force on 30 April, and the rate support grant supplementary report which we are debating now was laid only on 30 April. The education order is already in force. It is likely that the attempt that may be made later this evening to annul the order will not succeed. With the greatest respect to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone, I do not believe that his point carries any weight.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone also mentioned water rates. As he will probably realise, that issue is under discussion at the moment.

Mr. Straw: What is the answer?

Mr. Chope: I do not have a brief this evening to make a definitive statement about what will happen to the water rates. However, I am certain that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone shares my experience and has many constituents who feel that the present system of water rates is inequitable. An old lady living on her own may pay the same water rates as someone in the house next door where four people may be using a lot more water than the old lady. That complaint has been made frequently. Perhaps the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone will not be against reform in that area.

Mr. Boyes: Will there be a flat-rate charge for water or will there be metering? While I am on my feet, will the Minister consider another matter regarding water? I wrote to him in November last year asking whether water authorities would be competent authorities under EEC legislation. I have not yet received a reply to my letter. As this will be a very important issue during the general election, will the Minister ask his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to hire a typist to type out a reply to a very simple question that I asked last November?

Mr. Chope: I will pass that request on to my hon. Friend. I am sure that there is a good explanation why the answer has not been forthcoming in the way in which the hon. Gentleman expected.

Mr. Straw: Will it be metered or will there be a flat-rate charge?

Mr. Chope: If people want to open a book on this matter, that is all very well, but I cannot entertain a debate about that this evening.

I want to summarise briefly the main points of this report. It makes good the Government's undertaking to find a contribution towards the cost of the teachers' pay award in 1987-88. Provision is increased by £460 million, all of which goes to education authorities' GREs. The aggregate Exchequer grant is increased by £183 million; that means that the total of block grant now available is more than £9,000 million. The report also incorporates later information on capital allocations in GREs and reflects boundary changes that took place at the beginning of 1986 and 1987.

The present system is complicated. The Government are pledged to changing that system radically. In the meantime, I commend the report to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 188, Noes 135.

Division No. 154] **[7.55 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew

Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Sumberg, David
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allon, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 330), a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th April, be approved.

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

8.4 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I beg to move,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 325), a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th April, be approved.

The main purpose of the supplementary report is to ensure that additional provision and grant in respect of the teachers' pay settlement is incorporated at the earliest possible opportunity within the RSG settlement for 1987-88. I do not intend to refer back to the details of the settlement. The House debated and approved the Welsh rate support grant report for the year as recently as 25 March.

The supplementary report increases provision for relevant expenditure by £30 million in respect of teachers' pay. It also increases block grant by £17 million on that account. That additional provision reflects the Government's view of the share of the increased expenditure incurred by county councils which should be borne by taxpayers and ratepayers. The Government consider it important that there should be a significant increase in teachers' pay, but hope that in return the teachers will accept that they have a commitment to play their part in restoring normality to the education service and putting the care and education of children first.

The pay increases will give teachers on average a 16·4 per cent. increase in pay, in two stages. That amounts to a 25 per cent. increase between March 1986 and October 1987, an increase that most other groups would be only too delighted to receive. The new pay arrangements will be attractive to young people seeking a rewarding and satisfying career. After two years' experience, the pay of a good honours graduate is £10,000. Without any promotion, that teacher's salary would increase to a maximum of £13,300. That is an improvement of nearly £3,000 on the present scale 1 maximum of £10,500. There are also significant rewards and incentives for the better teacher and for those taking on extra responsibilities. Those allowances range from £500 to £4,200. A teacher receiving the maximum allowance would have a salary of £17,500. I am talking not of head teachers or deputy heads, but of teachers doing a very good job in the classroom or as heads of department.

For the most outstanding entrants to the profession, the goal could be the headship of a large comprehensive school with a salary of £30,500 from 1 October. That is an increase of over £4,000. We believe that the management of our schools is a responsible job which requires skills of a high order. It is important that those responsible posts should carry the kind of salary which reflects this. Naturally, only a minority of teachers will become heads or deputy heads; but under the new pay arrangements some 85 per cent. of entrants to teaching could expect at least one promotion during their career. The teachers have received a fair and generous settlement, and I hope that we shall now see an end to disruption in our schools.

I have also taken the opportunity in this report to correct an over-estimate of £2·2 million in the specific grant allocated in the main report for housing benefit administration costs. The effect of that over-estimate was to reduce the level of block grant in the main report and I have, therefore, made a compensating increase in block grant of £2·2 million. I have also revised the estimates for a number of specific grants in the light of information now available from local authorities. As a result of all those decisions, including the teachers' settlement, this supplementary report increases aggregate Exchequer grant by £18·1 million to £1,175·1 million, and increases the amount available for rate support grant and block grant by £19·2 million, to £947·1 million and £920·9 million respectively.

I have made it clear on previous occasions that councils' grant entitlement now depends upon their own spending decisions, and that additional grant is available for those that reduce their spending. The latest available information is that the aggregate of local authorities' budgeted total expenditure exceeds provision in this supplementary report by £23·2 million. That means that £10 million grant remains unclaimed.

That £10 million remains available to Welsh local authorities. I have deliberately chosen not to reduce the level of aggregate Exchequer grant in this report to reflect that underclaim. I urge local authorities in Wales to examine the scope which undoubtedly exists — as successive reports from the Audit Commission have quite clearly indicated—to achieve savings and to bring their spending back into line with the realistic assumptions underlying the settlement. It is perfectly possible for them to do so. Some Welsh district councils have demonstrated this by restraining their spending and, consequently, they will receive additional block grant. Districts as a whole have budgeted to spend less than the level allowed for in the settlement and have therefore increased their grant entitlement by £0·7 million. Extra block grant awaits all councils which reduce their spending and this can only be to the benefit of local authorities and, most important, their ratepayers.

In recent years we have seen that with good will and good sense many Welsh local authorities of differing political complexions can work effectively with the Government and make good use of the instruments that we have given them and the initiatives that we have taken. Places as varied as Rhondda, Wrexham, Newport and Swansea have undertaken urban renewal and housing renovation programmes on a major scale. A number have shown that it is possible to provide first-class services and to hold down rates.

No authority has done this better than the city of Cardiff. The Conservative council in Cardiff has served its citizens well, undertaking not just the usual tasks of a district authority, but the special responsibilities called for in a capital city, undertaking major tasks of urban renewal and support for the arts, and yet it has kept its rates down. The Conservative-controlled Cardiff council is charging the same rate, 19·9p, as it did in its first year of office. With that splendid record, I am confident that it will be re-elected, as it deserves, on Thursday to continue that task.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Before the Secretary of State carries on in this vein, will he tell the House and, presumably, people outside how many council houses have been built in the city of Cardiff since the Conservative party took control of the council and how many more people are on the waiting list there? May we have the figures?

Mr. Edwards: It will be for the electors of Cardiff to decide on Thursday.Cardiff city council, working with the

[Mr. Edwards]

Government, have launched the most major programme of urban renewal to be undertaken anywhere in the country, which will include major housing programmes, both for those in the cheapest form of housing and for all other citizens. I can think of no more considerable contribution to the future housing needs of the people of Cardiff than the projects that Cardiff city council has set in hand with the Government for the redevelopment of that city.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *rose*——

Mr. Edwards: I am interested that an hon. Member representing a Swansea constituency wishes to intervene and I am happy to give way to him, although I do not think that he will vote in the Cardiff elections.

Mr. Anderson: In what may be his swansong in Welsh debates, I am sure that the Secretary of State would like to end on a note of his usual objectivity and fairness. Therefore, having paid tribute to Cardiff, will he pay tribute to the enormous co-operation of Swansea city council with the Welsh Office in the marina project and the enterprise zone, and generally, for the benefit of all citizens of Swansea?

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman had not been talking to his neighbour and had been listening to me, he would have heard me do just that. I said that several local authorities, including Swansea, had undertaken urban renewal and housing renovation programmes on a major scale. If he listens to me carefully for the rest of the debate, he will not have to intervene so frequently.

At St. Mellons, the local authority and private sector, with the Government's support, have launched one of the most major innovative schemes for the provision of low-cost housing for the citizens of Cardiff which has yet been introduced. I dare say it will be a pioneer for housing development in the rest of the country.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Secretary of State give the simple figures showing the number of people on the housing list?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We cannot have two hon. Members on their feet at the same time.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will have plenty of opportunity to make his speech.

Mr. Rogers: Why does not the Secretary of State give the figures?

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman will restrain his verbal diarrhoea for a second, he will have a chance to speak later in the debate.

All ratepayers are entitled to expect their local authority to provide effective and efficient services to the community. They are entitled to see services maintained and rate bills kept down through the pursuit of efficiency and value for money. That is exactly what Cardiff has done and what other authorities can do.

Earlier I referred to the Audit Commission. I commend its reports which have examined key areas of council expenditure and pointed to ways of using resources more economically. The increase of £47 million in capital allocations in 1987-88 should allow prudent councils to achieve revenue savings through capital schemes. I urge councils on behalf of their ratepayers to consider carefully all the options for reducing their spending and thereby increasing their grant entitlement.

I commend my proposals for the supplementary report to the House.

8.15 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) suggested that this may be the Secretary of State's swansong and some of my colleagues, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) seemed to think that his comments were a dying swansong. Nevertheless, we wish him good health and a long, happy retirement in the City or wherever he chooses to spend his retirement years.

As I understand it, the main effect of the report is to adjust grant-related expenditure to take account of the teachers' pay settlement and in that sense it provides Welsh counties with an extra £30 million. The county councils would have liked, and certainly believed that they are entitled to, £35 million, mainly to keep pace with labour costs. Presumably their calculation is based on the settlement figure of 8·2 per cent. backdated to 1 January and a further 8·2 per cent. from 1 October.

It certainly makes good sense to pay decent salaries to attract and retain good teachers. Likewise, peace and calm must replace disruption and demoralisation in our classrooms. There is a need to make better provision for textbooks and even Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools has pronounced unfavourably on that matter.

The deterioration in the supply of books is a reason why parental contributions are on the increase and that in turn widens the differences between individual schools and pupils. The cuts in teaching staff are resulting in subjects being dropped from the curriculum and in those circumstances it makes no sense to pay teachers not to work. I shall be told that investing in education is a costly business, but failure to do so will be ruinous for Wales and, indeed, for the whole of the United Kingdom. The report stripped of its technical intricacies and jargon, is essentially about providing Government financial assistance to local government to administer the services which Parliament has authorised it to do.

This supplementary report, in the dying embers of this Parliament, cannot in any way be said to come to grips with the problems of Wales, which our local authorities are most anxious to tackle.

I note that a Welsh district council spokesman refers to the report as "low key", whereas our problems are enormous.

I have already referred to the problems in education, but the Secretary of State also touched on housing. The scale of the problem in this sector in Wales is outrageous and oozes of neglect, despite what the Secretary of State has said in order to try to keep Cardiff Conservative on Thursday. The White Paper on public expenditure demonstrates that, in reality, there is to be no increase in spending, despite the fact that there is a much higher proportion of older housing in Wales than in any other part of Great Britain. Over 40 per cent. of the housing stock, almost 450,000 houses, is more than 65 years old, compared with the figure of 30 per cent. in Britain as a whole. Many of those old properties lack basic amenities, so a considerable proportion of our people live in

unsatisfactory housing conditions. I suppose that we have grown accustomed to the fact that the Government do not care.

Homelessness is on the increase. In 1985 the number of households that were accepted as homeless was 9,200 in Wales. That is 7·4 per cent. higher than in 1984. Newport is a black spot, with a rate of 10 households in 1,000 becoming homeless.

We need to improve existing homes and build new ones. Poor housing is a false economy. It merely stores up problems for the future; yet house building creates more jobs for every pound spent than any other form of Government spending. We have thousands of construction workers on the dole in Wales and a massive shortage of decent homes. The arithmetic is simple. Housing investment makes economic as well as social sense.

I now turn to the vexed question of mass unemployment. It has plagued Wales throughout the eight years that the Government have been in office. With proper Government backing our local authorities could do much about this matter. The Government are now claiming that unemployment in Wales is falling. The Labour party welcomes any improvement in the situation. The CBI says that there is buoyancy in the economy. It is worth reminding the House that it said the same thing before the last election in 1983 but the subsequent three years saw further massive job losses and economic decline. The utterances of the Government and the CBI on unemployment and the state of the economy contain as much truth and authenticity as those wartime broadcasts of Lord Haw Haw from Germany.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): Has the hon. Gentleman noted that the Wales CBI, which often has been cautious in its statements and frequently critical of the Government, has seldom been as optimistic as it has recently? That is the Wales CBI, as opposed to the CBI for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hughes: The answer is simple. The last time that it was optimistic was on the eve of the 1983 general election. It is merely a case of history repeating itself.

The recent report of the Wales TUC is far more realistic when it points out that there are more people without what it calls "regular work" than there were a year ago. It says that there is an increase of 6,933, or 3·8 per cent. There is some difference between the two versions.

The difference in the two points of view is that so many thousands of people have been recruited on Government schemes of one sort of another. Mike Smith, the industrial editor of the *Western Mail*, clearly sets this out in an article on 4 May. It says:

"The latest figures for such schemes in Wales show that there are more than 21,000 people taking part in the Youth Training Scheme; 22,727 in the Community Programme; 5,000 taking advantage of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme and more than 4,000 in other employment schemes. This makes a total of more than 53,000 people.

In addition there has been a major attempt to encourage and help other unemployed people into regular jobs, training or special employment schemes under the Restart programme. So far more than 57,000 have been interviewed in Wales under Restart."

It does not say how many people have been put into employment as a result of those measures, but I understand that it is a tiny percentage.

Mike Smith goes on to say:

"In relation to the size of its population Wales would expect to have around 35,000 — not 53,000 — on these schemes.

This imbalance reflects the high unemployment levels in Wales, the concentration of such schemes in areas of most need and the consequent falls in unemployment rates."

Mr. Anderson: I remind my hon. Friend of the many times, when the Conservative party was in opposition, that the Secretary of State for Wales criticised us for what he called "phoney jobs", saying that the Conservatives would create real jobs.

Mr. Hughes: That is true. Those of us who were in the House during that period will remember the words of the Secretary of State very well.

I agree that some of these schemes may have limited value, but the vast bulk of them are not real jobs at all.

Another vital sector in which our local authorities have a major part to play is that of law and order. I have visited numerous housing estates in my constituency with Labour candidates in the local elections. On the Old Barn estate in St Julians, residents pleaded for more policemen on the beat. The same sentiments were expressed in the Broadmead and Moreland Park estates in Liswerry. One elderly couple in St Julians had their home burned to a cinder after petrol had been poured through the letter box. I remind the House that this was in Newport, Gwent, and not the riot-stricken areas of Liverpool, Birmingham and London. Yet when the police committee of Gwent put forward proposals to Gwent county council for 50 extra police constables they were attacked by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson), the Under-Secretary of State, for putting up the rates to pay for such expenditure. None of us likes paying rates, but such attacks reek of opportunism.

The report could have been the springboard for the Government to make a fresh start and a real onslaught to tackle deep-rooted problems, with the help and active co-operation of local authorities throughout Wales. In the event the Government have opted for the status quo. Unemployment and decay will continue so long as this Government remain in office. They must be thrown out, and the quicker the better.

8.31 pm

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) is ever a pessimist. He tends to use terminology redolent of political disputes of many years ago. The circumstances which he has mentioned obtain in some matters and I should like to comment on some of them.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, the supplementary grant is dominated by the provision for the increase in teachers' salaries. All parties agree that this is a desirable allocation. The Government have been right in giving priority to increases in teachers' and nurses' pay. Those were the two outstanding salary needs and I am glad that both have been honoured. The hon. Member for Newport, East said that major provision should have been made, but I think he will agree that the increase in pay is large proportionately. A correct decision has been made and it is not for us to understate such a significant increase in expenditure.

I hope that the teachers' dispute will now die away. Many teachers say that they feel almost as strongly, and some of them perhaps more strongly, about negotiation machinery. It would be out of order for me to elaborate

[Sir Raymond Gower]

on that but, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has pointed out, he wishes the former Burnham machinery to be replaced by adequate machinery as quickly as possible and as soon as there is general agreement throughout the profession. I subscribe to that view. The main provision in regard to teachers' salaries is all to the good.

The hon. Member for Newport, East also referred to housing needs. We have housing needs which have been aggravated by unusual circumstances. Many of the worst cases with which I have to deal result from broken marriages. That is a real problem, which one cannot under-estimate. I hope that in the months and years ahead, the incoming Government will permit special attention to be given to the problems of one-parent families. The problems of one-parent families and broken marriages may be a sign of a social breakdown for which there are various reasons, but certainly they are serious in many parts of the country.

On housing in general, the hon. Member for Newport, East did not pay sufficient heed to the published statements of the leaders of housebuilders in Wales about their great contribution to the provision of jobs over the last few years. There has been a decided upturn in output by members of the House-Builders Federation and the Federation of Master Builders.

I am not entirely happy about the money which local authorities could use for repairs and renewals from the amounts that they have obtained from the sale of houses. I hope that this can be considered again and that the release of the money can be accelerated, particularly in parts of the country where people are unemployed in the industry.

The hon. Member for Newport, East also referred to unemployment; although it is not covered in the supplementary grant, part of the expenditure could be interpreted as being related to it. I do not quarrel with his reference to unemployment, but, when referring to provision for training, he said that these were not real jobs. Of course the training itself is not a real job, but the hon. Gentleman must appreciate the need to extend training in all parts of the United Kingdom, and not least in Wales where our traditional industries have been in decline and newer industries are taking the place of iron, steel and coal. Therefore, the need for the various training measures introduced by the Department of Employment is very real. We should not refer to these as being undesirable; they are very desirable.

As the CBI in Wales has pointed out, there are grounds for cautious optimism in the Welsh economy. Not for many years has there been such a long period when successive reductions in unemployment have been announced month after month. We can be encouraged by that. I should not like to overstate the case, but each time new figures are published there is cause for optimism. Even more impressive has been the increase in notified vacancies. Opposition Members often refer to the figures having been massaged. They may use that terminology but there cannot be massaging of notified vacancies.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): They fiddle them.

Sir Raymond Gower: The hon. Gentleman may think that, but the published figures of notified vacancies are increasing steadily. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Part-time jobs for women."] They are not all part-time jobs. In any case, the new industries that are coming into Wales will require new skills and different kinds of labour. To that extent, any increase in the number of vacancies is desirable. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not think that we should be unhappy that vacancies are increasing. That is an encouraging factor. The provision that we have made is encouraging and, without being foolishly optimistic, we can take some consolation from the fact that the worst times of unemployment seem to be past, and that the decline in our major industries is probably now behind us. There are definite prospects of improvement in the months and years ahead.

8.41 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): While we must welcome the additional money for Welsh local authorities in the supplementary report, I do not think that there is anything in it to make us sing for joy. All that I can see are adjustments in the main report to cope with matters such as teachers' remuneration, and so on. The local authorities are in the same situation as before—having to scrape around for enough money to fulfil their obligations, and getting into trouble if they overstep an impossible financial limit that has been imposed by central Government.

Nothing that we have heard from the Secretary of State tonight has persuaded me that the Government have any sympathy with local government problems. As with everything else, they see such problems as matters of profit and loss, and the element of service and care for the community is entirely missing from their calculations. Their whole attitude is one of criticism of local authorities and a desire to take away any powers that they have, so as to increase power at the centre. Local democracy means nothing to the Government and the whole operation seems geared to stifling local initiative. It does not seem to matter that a generous proportion of local people want improved services, better school buildings, more home help for the elderly and better facilities for the young and the old. We should not allow such services to run down by penalising councils, which are, after all, doing their best under difficult conditions.

The teachers' pay settlement is obviously to be welcomed, but I have no doubt that later in the debate we shall hear about the vexed problem of negotiating rights. The position in the education sector is a grievous one. Capitation allowances are often too low; books are in a tatty condition—I know that from my own children's experience; books are shared, and there is a lack of choice in school curriculums. That is a serious matter. We won the battle in Powys recently over the closures of small schools, and the county council voted in favour of keeping them open. It is noticeable that the Secretary of State for Education is now falling into line with the views of Powys on such matters. There is a huge sparsity factor in our rural communities, and I hope that the Secretary of State will take that seriously, as he is well aware of it.

We also have immense problems of infrastructure—roads, bridges and schools — and we need some recognition of the sparsity problems in these matters too. Housing has already been mentioned, and I wish to make one point about it. Councils and districts have had to sell council houses, and we are in favour of that. However, it is seriously wrong that they have not been allowed to build enough houses in the rented sector, or spend the amount

of money that they have gained from selling council houses to invest in new housing stock. Of course, they have been allowed some of the money that they have received from council house sales, but only a small proportion of it.

The Government are imposing ever more centralised control. That can be seen clearly in their proposals for a poll tax, which they undoubtedly want to impose on us if they can. There are great problems in the present rating system but the poll tax will produce even greater inequalities and injustices, and further reduce local control over the revenue for local government. That is a serious undermining of local democracy. Much more feasible would be the replacement of domestic rates, a local income tax, with the rates determined locally, thus ensuring a great deal more accountability.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Will the hon. Gentleman inform the House what the rate of local income tax is likely to be in Powys and the rest of Wales? We have heard figures ranging from 8p to 13p. The Government have published detailed figures on the likely consequences of our proposals. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will enter the election with a clear statement of the figures and the additional burden of income tax that he intends to impose on the electors.

Mr. Livsey: The right hon. Gentleman will read our election manifesto with interest and see our proposals laid out in it. They have been fully costed and responsibly audited by a national firm of accountants. I am sure that he will see that they are serious and responsible proposals.

Grants from central Government would then be based on an assessment of local needs.

Mr. Rogers: Little Tories.

Mr. Livsey: I deprecate what the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has said. We are not little Tories: We believe in investing in infrastructure and local government.

Local government would at least and at last be able to provide for its own communities with the full co-operation and consent of that community, which is our view of true local democracy.

8.48 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): It is evident that the policies that we have heard expressed by Liberal hon. Members on local government will be as ruinous for ratepayers as those of the Labour party.

I shall be brief. I must register relief that the ending of the interminable teachers' dispute appears to be in sight. I shall be glad if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education can knock away the one remaining and rather shaky leg in the teachers' argument—their preposterous claim to have been deprived of their negotiating rights. They have deprived themselves of those rights by their total inability to agree about anything.

This debate marks one of a series of farewell performances by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. They are becoming as numerous as those of Dame Nellie Melba, and as melodious and agreeable to hear. We were probably also listening to the swansong of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) tonight. I am sure that some of us, at least, will miss his contributions to our debates immensely, but I shall not.

If the teachers' dispute has not hit my constituency as badly as it might have done, that is because local leaders of the teachers' unions and in particular of the National Union of Teachers have shown a commendable restraint that was in no way encouraged by the attitude of Opposition Members, who seemed to go out of their way to encourage the teachers' organisations to be as obdurate as possible. I wish to pay brief tribute to the president of the NUT in my area who died yesterday—Mr. Aelwyn Morgan, the headmaster of Ysgol y Castell. He led the National Union of Teachers in my area with immense restraint and responsibility, and he will be sorely missed.

The dispute is a shameful story and I hope that when the teachers' strike has been settled and they resume normal working, more and more of them will decide that they wish to be represented by a union such as the Professional Association of Teachers, which has consistently put the interests of pupils first.

Even those of us who have mixed feelings about welcoming the increase in teachers' salaries will have no such feelings about the corresponding increase in nurses' pay. It was won without any threat of industrial action and seems to be a model of how these affairs should be conducted. On that note and with an affectionate farewell to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I shall resume my seat.

8.50 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): As one of the few Members present this evening who have had experience of sitting and standing in front of a class, I join hon. Members who have thanked the Government for this pay award. The teachers certainly deserve it. The role of the teacher in our schools has changed enormously in the last few years. The mantel that they wear and the burden that has been imposed upon them are enormous. That burden was imposed not necessarily by the Government, but by the changes that have taken place in our society.

I shall mention a few of the things that any Government expects from the teaching profession. It is to teachers that Government seem to delegate an important role in health education. It is teachers who tell children about the dangers of cigarette smoking, of excessive alcohol consumption and of solvent abuse. The teacher is expected to inform his or her pupils about all kinds of problems affecting the health of our nation.

The Home Office provides an excellent pack about fire hazards in the home, and teachers are supposed to use it to explain to children the fire risks in the home to which they may be subjected. It is on the teacher that the Government put the important burden to explain to children the importance of road safety and the problem of deaths on our roads. When the Government decided to introduce the new general certificate of secondary education, they faced the teacher with the fundamental problem about the resources that are needed for the enormous amount of project work that the GCSE system will involve. Of course this is an excellent burden to put on the teacher, but will the teaching profession be able to respond to the challenge, especially in mathematics and physics where there is such a desperate shortage of secondary school teachers?

When did hon. Members last sit at the back of a classroom and observe the conditions in our schools? I am sure that some hon. Members have done that. By doing that and seeing what goes on, we see that the teaching profession is doing its utmost to get its message over. I am glad that money has been made available for this pay

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

settlement, but there is a sting in the tail. It is that this settlement has been imposed on the teaching profession and the Government are unwilling to put a maximum size on the class that the teacher will have. The imposition of that settlement, the lack of future negotiating rights and the amount to be paid to teachers in a few years are at the heart of the concern in the teaching profession.

There is another fundamental point. A teacher finds it extremely difficult to stand in front of his class and transmit the cultural values that are expected of him. That is because he has to ask what those children can look forward to. What kind of society are the Government producing? The difficult question for our teachers to answer is, can the children who are now in our schools look forward to a life of individualism or will they face life in a society in which competition has reached such a level that conscience in terms of the community will almost have disappeared?

Will the Government look back on their term of office and say that they have succeeded in making the market and market values and materialism the prime focuses and determining driving forces of life in Britain? The values that are now being taught do not teach that there are things other than material benefit — much as that is important — that are fundamental to our society. I am extremely perturbed that the sense of community and neighbour helping neighbour and friend helping friend is extremely difficult to engender in our schools, given the values that the Government are building in.

The Secretary of State for Education has gone back on what he said about village schools. I am delighted that he has done so, and in the run-up to the election the more of his colleagues who go back on all kinds of things that they have said the better. I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales has exactly the same formula as the Secretary of State for Education and Science so that no longer will the numbers of children be a determining factor in deciding whether village schools will be closed. I hope he will ensure that resources are made available to local authorities in Wales to ensure that the same facility will apply in Wales as applies in England. He should not do what he did with executive houses and impose on the planning structure in Wales a settlement that the people of England would never put up with.

8.56 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): For reasons that I think we all know well, this is not the best attended of Welsh debates on this important subject of the rate support grant settlement. I notice that at least 65 per cent. of the Welsh Conservative Members are present. The Welsh Labour party has managed 50 per cent., and for most of the evening even the Liberal party has had the same proportion present as the Welsh Conservative party. As the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) might well appreciate, I notice that the Welsh Nationalist party is conspicuous by its 100 per cent. absence from the debate. I especially remember the hon Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) lecturing me last Wednesday morning about how important it was that the House continue this week. We will see what happens.

As did the hon. Member for Gower, I want to comment on the pay settlement. It seems that there is now not so much talk about teachers' pay, although I could well appreciate any teacher saying to me that, even after the effect of the three pay increases by the autumn of this year which will achieve a cumulative total of about 25 or 26 per cent., he still wanted more. Instead, the argument now is about negotiating procedures or negotiating rights, call them what one may. With rights inevitably go responsibilities. All of us would say that usually there is no more responsible group than teachers. However, I feel that now teachers are doing themselves no service by dwelling on this point.

As with many people from Wales, I come from a family of teachers. There is a natural sympathy towards the position of teachers, but I have observed a widespread criticism of teachers, not least from schoolchildren. Parents have often said to me that children are losing, or have lost, respect for their teachers. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, above all the dreadful discription in our schools must now come to an end. It has done nothing to help the teachers' case and, above all, it has threatened the whole end product about which teachers and everybody else must be concerned — the quality of the education of pupils when they leave school.

The cost of the teachers' pay settlement is the main part of the report, but it is not the only part. We all know that a council's grant entitlement is now dependent upon its own decisions on spending. As a result of the decision of Welsh local councils, there is now £10 million unallocated, about which I understand my right hon. Friend to have said that he is waiting to see what savings can be achieved by local councils which would entitle them to this unallocated £10 million. I suggest to my right hon. Friend that he should not wait too long before these savings become apparent, as it may be possible to recognise those who already play the role of the wise councils in Wales.

The most obvious example is Cardiff city council. Cardiff is a city that is moving forward. For years we have had a civic centre that rivals any in Europe. Rather more recently we achieved a glorious shopping centre in St. David's centre and, as the jewel in its crown, the new St. David's hall. When we have had an early night here, I have often gone back to the flat and put on BBC2 to find that I was reminded of Cardiff because I heard concerts from St. David's hall. St. David's hall has been far more successful than I think anyone anticipated.

In addition to the St. David's centre and St. David's hall is a very active plan for a world trade centre which is being considered with great enthusiasm. Next week, the centre point of the Cardiff chamber of commerce annual general meeting is to be a presentation by the developers of the new world trade centre.

Top of the list in Cardiff must be the south Cardiff redevelopment, a grand plan to transform 3,000 acres of largely derelict docklands. There is tremendous interest in this scheme across the world. Cardiff is truly an international city that is moving forward into the 21st century. I am confident that Cardiff will make other cities in the United Kingdom sit up and take notice — places like Bristol, which all too often has been patronising about the M4 and the Severn Bridge. Bristol regards the M4 west of it as merely a back road. Places such as Bristol will find Cardiff becoming the international centre for the south-western quarter of the United Kingdom, eclipsing many other places. This all comes about because of Conservative drive and enthusiasm.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Absolute rubbish.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Member for Caernarfon has at last arrived and made one of his more intelligent contributions.

It is vital that the drive and enthusiasm be maintained. I am glad that my right hon. Friend has set up a development corporation to ensure that the south Cardiff redevelopment goes through. The drive from the Conservative-controlled city council in Cardiff in recent years has been complemented by Conservative drive from the Welsh Office, which has brought about the south Cardiff redevelopment.

In the tributes that have already been paid to my right hon. Friend, I fancy that perhaps he would be happiest with the tribute that the redevelopment of south Cardiff will come about in the years to come. That will be a permanent monument to what he has achieved in his time as Secretary of State for Wales. I can assure the House that there is a great head of steam to see that redevelopment come about. It is true that we have a large measure of support from the other political parties, but I should be apprehensive if the Conservative drive and determination were to be lost. The redevelopment might still go ahead, but I fear that it would not go ahead as well or as quickly.

I shall return to the unallocated figure of £10 million that my right hon. Friend still has in rate support grant settlement. I can assure him that Cardiff would spend it, and spend it well. We have a tremendous record on housing. The Conservative-controlled Cardiff city council has spent three times as much as the previous Labour administration — £90 million since 1983, compared to £30 million in the four years before. Last year alone there were more houses built in Cardiff than had been built in any other year. As my right hon. Friend said, there is an innovation in housing development, with 600 new houses for rent being built in St. Mellons, that everybody else in the country ought to watch closely. Please let us not wait too long for the savings to come about. Cardiff could spend it, and we could make the House proud in the spending of it.

9.5 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): One advantage of speaking a little later in the debate is that one can hear some of the attitudes of Conservative Members. What has appalled me is the pomposity of Conservative Members in congratulating the Welsh Office on the settlement. We see no value from the settlement in the valleys of south Wales.

As has been rightly said, the major part of the report is to do with the teachers' settlement. However, if one goes into the schools of Wales one will find a profession that has been demoralised by the Secretary of State for Education and Science. One will find that class numbers are on the increase, problems of discipline exist and that teachers are finding it difficult to cope.

The ultimate hypocrisy of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and Conservative Members is that they are prescribing for a system to which they do not send their children. They stand at the Dispatch Box and lay down a programme for our education system when they have no confidence in it at all. They send their children to public schools and tell us how our state schools have to be run. What utter and complete hypocrisy. That extends beyond the education system into the Health Service. They prescribe what health system we should have but at the same time they opt out and go for private medicine. They prescribe for others but they do not have the courage to participate themselves. Now they are sitting there squirming and ashamed of themselves because it is being pointed out to them.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): Where did the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) go to school?

Mr. Rogers: Who is the hon. Member for Durham, North?

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time.

Mr. Rogers: I have been told that my time is nearly up and that we are allowed only two minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not by me.

Mr. Rogers: Indeed, not by you, Mr. Speaker.

I simply wanted to make the point that the pathetic posturing of the Conservative party will stand it in bad stead, not only in the local elections on Thursday, where it will get a drubbing even in the city of Cardiff, irrespective of the oily, treacly words of the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and it will get a drubbing in Wales in the general election.

9.9 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I want to make one of my characteristically brief, succinct and low-key contributions to this debate, so I will not pass much comment on the speech by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). It is interesting, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson) said, that the Opposition education spokesman, in whom they take such great pride, is a Wykehamist. He had an independent education. It was interesting also to hear the hon. Member for Rhondda whistling to keep up his courage. Conservative Members know how depressed the members of the Labour party are. Whatever they may say in this Chamber, we know that they are calculating on a very heavy defeat, not just on Thursday but in a few weeks' time nationally.

The supplementary report is largely concerned with the pay of schoolteachers, enabling the Government to pay local authorities an extra grant towards their pay increases. The Government's pay proposals for teachers are extremely generous. They will give teachers a 16·4 per cent. pay rise which, added to the existing increases, will mean that teachers will receive an average 25 per cent. pay increase between March 1986 and October this year. That pay award is unique in its generosity. What other profession has received a pay rise of this dimension?

The Government have genuinely attempted to find a long-term solution which will be fair to all, especially to pupils. The Government had no alternative, after two years of ineffectual free collective bargaining, when the teachers could not agree on anything among themselves — as my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) said — but to dispense with the existing negotiating machinery.

The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act sets up an interim committee to advise the Secretary of State on these matters. I have been assured by my hon. Friend, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), that teachers' unions will continue to be involved in discussions about pay and conditions of service. The interim committee will take evidence and receive representations from teachers' unions as well as

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

from local authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must consult both sides before issuing orders, which in turn will be subject to parliamentary approval.

As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has said, the arrangements under the Act are interim, until 30 March 1990, by which time permanent arrangements should be in existence. There is absolutely no justification for renewed disruption. I, no doubt like other hon. Members, have received heartfelt letters from schoolchildren in my constituency who are extremely worried about the effects of renewed disruption on their examinations. I will quote from one letter, but I will not disclose which school it comes from as that might disclose the identity of the young boy. I will read it because I believe it is important. It states:

"I am a fifth year pupil . . . I am taking my O level and CSE examinations in June/July of this year. I have been informed . . . that I am to be the victim of yet another afternoon off school due to the selfish action of the NUT and the NAS/UWT. I am very worried that this could seriously damage my examination chances as I will not have the full assistance of my tutors.

I would be very grateful if you could do anything to prevent me losing too much schooling. I have spoken with my headmaster . . . who has said there is little he can do."

This is a genuine letter. *[Interruption.]* I am quite happy to show the letter to any hon. Member after the debate. I am as anxious as the pupils who have written the letters.

I, no doubt like many colleagues, spend at least one Friday in four visiting schools in my constituency. The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) said that he did not know the last time that any of us had been at the back of a classroom. In my case it was last Friday morning in three of my junior schools. I always come away impressed by the commitment, the dedication, of the teachers I have met. I have the highest respect for them as a profession. I know that the vast majority of them put pupils first and would do nothing to harm their examination—and so their future—prospects.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: No, I will not, because I am making only a few brief points.

I am dismayed that any teacher would take out his or her discontent on children, especially at this highly pressurised time when they are about to sit exams. I have tried to reassure those schoolchildren who have written to me and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Conwy for telling me that the Welsh Joint Education Committee's monitoring of last year's exam results reveals that industrial action had no significant effect. I am also grateful to him for informing me that if a school considers that its pupils have been seriously affected by industrial action, that school can apply to the WJEC for consideration as a special case, for that action to be taken into consideration in the marking of its pupils' exams.

However, that should not be necessary. There should not be disruption. Schoolteachers have been given the best pay deal that they have ever had. I hope that those teachers who are considering disruption will think of their pupils and their profession. I hope that they will not continue their campaign so that they do not lose the further respect of parents and pupils.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred in his opening remarks to the Audit Commission's reports on how resources could be spent more economically by local authorities. I come back to the question of surplus places. How can it be sensible for a local education authority to spend £3·5 million a year to keep 22,300 school places empty? It is mad. Yet that is exactly what is happening in Clwyd with, I am sad to say, the strong support of both the real Labour party and its faded photostat, the Liberals.

The Government do not want to remove all those places because they know, as I and my hon. Friends know, that many rural schools are thriving, playing a vital part in the life of the community that they serve. But the Government know, as do my hon. Friends, that when a school becomes too small, with the few remaining pupils in single figures and different age groups, that is not in the interests of a child's educational or social development, nor is it the way to realise the full potential contribution of a teacher to his or her community.

Just think what could be done if the Government's target of removing two fifths of those places was to be reached in Clwyd. Just think what we could do with the £1·4 million that is currently wasted, and how that money could be redeployed with great advantage to the education of children in the county. I hope that all Opposition parties, including that represented by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) whom I now see in his place, will think seriously about that point. It is not just a financial point; it is an educational and social point. Just think what could be done with that money in our hard-pressed urban primary schools. As I said, I visited three last Friday morning. Some of them have classes of between 35 and 41. I am so sad that the Opposition parties, particularly the Labour and Liberal parties, forget about those hard-pressed urban primary schools. We must also think about them, their need for resources—and the need for a balance of resources between rural and urban schools.

Just think, too, what could be done with some of that £1·4 million for Clwyd's school library stock, which was slashed in 1985 from £75,000 to £15,000, where it has remained ever since. Just think too, what could be done with some of that money for the county's school maintenance budget which was cut, wrongly in my view, by £11,000 last year.

I am happy that Clwyd county council is looking at each school within the county on its merits, not just on its financial merits but on its educational and social merits. Every aspect should be taken into consideration.

With this supplementary report the Government have shown their generosity and the fact that they are determined to improve education and education standards—the quality of the teaching of our pupils. I hope that in return our local authorities, particularly my own in Clwyd, will respond by spending their resources more efficiently, and thus more effectively, to ensure that all the children in my constituency and the other constituencies within Clwyd have the best possible education and the best possible start in life.

9.18 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Members on the Conservative Benches form the opposition party in Wales. They will form the opposition after the local elections and after the next general election.

They had two themes this evening. First, there was a general attack on the National Union of Teachers, and, from one Conservative member, a plug for the Professional Association of Teachers. Do they not

consider that the current troubles in our schools are due, at least in part, to the way in which the teaching profession has been used and abused by the Government over the years? Was there not something just a little Janus-faced in the comments of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan)? He talked about saving the money that goes on empty places in schools, yet praised the Government's new pre-election initiative on rural schools. We cannot have both.

Another theme from Conservative Members was a plug for the beleaguered Cardiff city council as it approaches the local elections. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) told us of an array of achievements by the city council, but he did not respond to Labour Members' simple questions: how many houses have been built in the public sector in Cardiff in the past year, and by how much has homelessness increased? Surely those matters are of considerable interest to Cardiff ratepayers.

The Secretary of State's approach throughout his speech was that of a complacent accountant — an approach clearly ill suited to the many needs of Wales. That approach is reflected, too, in the attitude of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to our national problems. He claims that we have the most successful economy in Europe, and that is true if our economy is looked at purely through the eyes of a City analyst. It is not so if we examine the economy in broader terms, taking into account social questions, unemployment and related problems. I do not define the performance of the economy in terms of what is good for the City.

In much the same way, the Secretary of State stressed that local authorities in Wales can do a good job by reducing their spending and increasing their grant aid from central Government, to the benefit, as he said, of ratepayers. I remind the Secretary of State that ratepayers do not have as their sole and narrow concern the level of rates. Of course they are anxious for their money to be spent efficiently, and that is a proper consideration. However, ratepayers have parents who want to find places in residential homes and who need home helps. They also have children who may not be able to afford their own homes and face the consequences of the slump in house building.

Ratepayers realise that, in spite of our aged and declining housing stock in Wales, we still spend less proportionately on housing than other regions of the United Kingdom. Ratepayers have children who are looking for jobs. The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) talked about the increasing number of job vacancies, and we certainly welcome that. However, if we analyse the figures, we find that many of them are part-time jobs, relevant for women. They are frequently low-paid jobs. I invite the Secretary of State to provide an analysis of the new jobs. He will find that they are frequently low-wage jobs that do not add substantially to the economy of our communities.

Ratepayers are concerned not only with their rate bills but with the security of their homes and their estates and with the quality of their environment. Goldsmith—and not Sir James or Sir Walter Goldsmith—talked about a society where wealth accumulates and men decay. That process characterises much of Government policy today. Wealth is certainly accumulating—we can see that from escalating house prices in London and the profits and salaries in the City—but, in terms of their quality of public provision, the lives of our men and women are decaying.

I am confident that that strain of Government policy which is content to allow the City to flourish and to look narrowly at the bill for the ratepayer will be rejected by ratepayers in the local government elections.

It will be rejected in Swansea. Even in spite of what the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Cardiff, North have said, I am confident that that basic strain in Conservative thinking will also be decisively rejected in Cardiff.

9.25 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply briefly. I should like to ask the Secretary of State a question on which I stand to be corrected. Why are our county councils losing £12 million by the non-recycling of grant this year? They can do with that money.

I very much admired the noble sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) in his defence of teachers and the important role that they play in society. By contrast, we heard the reactionary, scab-ridden remarks of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who seemed to justify taking away the teachers' negotiating rights. I thought for a moment that we were back a century and a half with the disputes over the Combination Acts. Negotiating rights for our trade unions are basic to a free society. The sooner those rights are restored, the better it will be for all concerned.

I appreciate that there are nine district councils for whom the change in grant-related expenditure is equivalent to a rate increase of 1p or more. Then there are the seven district councils for which the change is equivalent to a rate reduction of 1p or more. We have noted that one of the authorities to benefit is South Pembroke—quite a coincidence, I am sure. Even with small changes, the difference in grant distribution shows that the Government's method of calculating payments to local authorities is inadequate. It certainly prevents our local authorities from engaging in long-term planning with any confidence. The report, even in a narrow context, does nothing to alter the essentially unsatisfactory nature of the 1987-88 settlement.

The fact remains that Wales has lost more than £650 million in rate support grant since the Conservative party came to power. I feel sure that the vast bulk of our local authorities are glad to get away from the diktat of the present Secretary of State and the ruthless, uncaring policies of the Thatcher Government whom he has supported.

9.28 pm

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Presumably, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) opened and closed this debate because he suddenly realised that he has a marginal seat. The other day, the *South Wales Argus* proclaimed:

"Roy Hughes to lose after 21 years."

The hon. Gentleman opened the debate by questioning the £30 million increase and saying that the county councils would have liked £35 million. The allowance for expenditure was based on careful calculations using the best available figures for teachers' pay. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman has any substance for his figure.

[Mr. Nicholas Edwards]

The report only adjusts the 1987-88 settlement. A later supplementary report will cover the period from 1 January to the start of the new financial year.

The hon. Member for Newport, East referred to cuts in teaching staff. Pupil-teacher ratios have improved under the Government. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman, like so many others in this debate, called for a return to peace in our schools. He and others spoke of housing needs. He said that we did not care. He talked about housing investment making economic and social sense. The last Labour Government decreased growth capital expenditure by just over 50 per cent. We increased growth capital expenditure by 14 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1986-87, and there will be a £47 million increase in the allocation for 1987-88, with housing provision up by 19 per cent.

There was a lot of talk about the condition of the housing stock. The last Labour Government spent £143 million on improving the housing stock, whereas we have spent £615 million on improving the housing stock. The Opposition talk about it but have done nothing about it; we have.

Unemployment in Wales has been falling for 10 consecutive months, and in 11 of the last 12 months it has been falling faster than in any other region of the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman quoted Mike Smith, of the *Western Mail*, on the scale of schemes to train people and help the unemployed. He commented that those schemes were being concentrated on areas where help is most needed. I cannot think of a greater compliment. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should criticise. Can I assume that it is the policy of the Labour party to cut such excellent programmes, or to target them less effectively?

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) welcomed, as did many other hon. Members, the additional resources to cover the teachers' pay increase, but he did not seem to understand that better care for the community also means making more effective use of resources. He spelt out the Liberal party policy for an additional tax on income, but he was characteristically unwilling to give any figures, although figures of between 8 and 13 per cent. have been frequently quoted and not denied by the Liberal party. That is interesting, if they are really proposing that income tax should go from 27p to 40p in the pound, but no doubt when their manifesto is published all things will be made clear.

We have been given that promise by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor. We will examine that manifesto with great care and I will have more to say about his pronouncement in due course. He had better wait and see whether I have the opportunity to play any part during an election campaign in relation to the manifesto. I think I may find some time to devote attention at least to seeing that he does not continue to be my own Member of Parliament in Brecon and Radnor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) made a plea for putting pupils first. Surely every hon. Member endorses that plea. The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) welcomed the extra provision for teachers' pay, but I understand that he intends later tonight to vote against the order making the necessary resources available to local government. The hon. Gentleman spoke about a desperate shortage of teachers of maths and physics. I can tell him that, as one result of the settlement, there has been an increase in recruitment for teacher training, particularly for maths, up 42 per cent., and physics, up 80 per cent. That suggests that our policies are moving in the right direction.

The hon. Gentleman talked about neighbour helping neighbour and friend helping friend. That is very difficult to achieve at a time when he and his colleagues have been encouraging a dispute to rumble on in the schools and the teachers have been disrupting the education service. My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) was right about rural schools and about getting better use of resources. He produced the balance to be found absolutely correctly: the need to cut the number of empty places in the schools but at the same time to take proper account of the needs of rural communities.

I believe that my hon. Friend was also right when he said that there was absolutely no excuse at all for renewed disruption in the schools. Surely on that point at least, there must be total agreement throughout the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 186, Noes 134.

Division No. 198] **[9.35 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Forth, Eric
Alexander, Richard	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Ancram, Michael	Freeman, Roger
Ashby, David	Fry, Peter
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Gale, Roger
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Galley, Roy
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Bendall, Vivian	Gower, Sir Raymond
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Greenway, Harry
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Gregory, Conal
Blackburn, John	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Ground, Patrick
Bottomley, Peter	Grylls, Michael
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes	Hampson, Dr Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Hanley, Jeremy
Bright, Graham	Hargreaves, Kenneth
Brinton, Tim	Harris, David
Brooke, Hon Peter	Hawksley, Warren
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Hayes, J.
Browne, John	Hayward, Robert
Bruinvels, Peter	Heddle, John
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Henderson, Barry
Budgen, Nick	Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Bulmer, Esmond	Hickmet, Richard
Burt, Alistair	Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Butterfill, John	Hind, Kenneth
Chapman, Sydney	Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Chope, Christopher	Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Churchill, W. S.	Howard, Michael
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Clegg, Sir Walter	Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Conway, Derek	Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Coombs, Simon	Irving, Charles
Cormack, Patrick	Jackson, Robert
Couchman, James	Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Dunn, Robert	Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*	Key, Robert
Evennett, David	King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Eyre, Sir Reginald	Knowles, Michael
Fallon, Michael	Knox, David
Farr, Sir John	Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Favell, Anthony	Latham, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy	Lawler, Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet	Lawrence, Ivan
Forman, Nigel	Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*	Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*

Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Sumberg, David
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waller, Gary
Walls, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hartford)*
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Cabor[illegible] Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Tony Lloyd.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary report 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 325), a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th April, be approved.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

9.46 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 650), dated 6th April 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th April, be annulled.

Normally an order that involves increases in pay does not lead to political controversy. However, this order is an exception to that rule, first, because the provisions on pay are introduced in conjunction with provisions covering the conditions of employment. For the first time, conditions of employment for teachers are being laid down by statutory instrument. It is certainly the case that the ACAS agreement covered conditions of service, as well as pay. Indeed, that was one of its main strengths. However, the key difference between that agreement and the order that we are debating is that whereas the ACAS agreement was freely agreed between the local authority employers and the majority of teachers, this order is being imposed on the local authorities and teachers.

Under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987, that highly controversial piece of legislation that we debated for 23 hours continuously last December, the Secretary of State has the power to make provision on pay and conditions by order. During those debates we predicted that the Secretary of State would use the power contained in that legislation to impose his own will on the teachers and employers, and that is precisely what he has done. Therefore, as the Opposition, we are using the power that we have under that Act to protest against the Secretary of State's diktat by praying against the order tonight.

Our argument against the Secretary of State's diktat is twofold. First, it is wrong in principle to set aside an agreement that has been freely negotiated between the employers and the majority of their employees and to impose a ministerial solution by statutory instrument. Secondly, as I have frequently warned the Secretary of State, a settlement that has been freely negotiated is always more likely to stick than one that has been imposed from the top.

The conditions of service laid down in the order are complex and wide-ranging. Even if the main teachers' organisations were not so hostile to what the Secretary of State is doing, it would need give and take on both sides for the conditions to work successfully in practice. The problem for the Secretary of State and the tragedy for pupils and parents is that new conditions will be introduced at a time when relations between the Government and teachers are even worse than they were when the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) was Secretary of State, and that, indeed, is saying something.

Instead of accepting the new conditions of service as a necessary part of a new deal, teachers are bitterly resentful of what they see as yet another act of provocation by a hostile Government. After all, this Government have taken away their bargaining rights and replaced them with ministerial diktat—a position which, according to the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 will last until at least 31 March 1990.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Not beyond?

Mr. Radice: Until at leact 31 March 1990. If the hon. Lady doubts me, she should read the Act, which I suspect she has not done.

We all know that the Secretary of State, in one of those manipulative press leaks which have become his trade mark, told *The Daily Telegraph* that tonight he would tell us that there may be—just may be—some permanent body set up to decide pay and conditions before 1990. Apparently the interim advisory Committee — the Secretary of State's tame poodle — will advise the Secretary of State on what sort of body that will be. Obviously, the Secretary of State knows perfectly well that proposals along those lines are unlikely to satisfy the teachers. They rightly want the restoration of their negotiating rights.

Before the Secretary of State says that that means the restoration of Burnham, I shall remind him, as I have done on many occasions, that both local authority employers and teachers now accept that pay and conditions should be discussed together and that the Secretary of State's position on the negotiaing body should be fully protected. Even the Secretary of State must admit that that is a considerably different proposal from that of the old Burnham committee.

I have been watching the Secretary of State for many months—and the truth is that he is not in the business of settling the teachers' dispute. That is presumably why the so-called

"sources close to the Education Secretary"

stressed to *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday that his proposals were not to be seen as an "olive branch" but were instead a "step along the road," whatever that may mean.

The Secretary of State is not interested in solving the teachers' dispute, at least before the general election. That is presumably why he is not prepared for the future of pay determination to be discussed until the summer. Incidentally, when will he announce the names of those on the interim committee?

Typically, what the Secretary of State wanted is what he got—a friendly headline in a friendly newspaper. *[Interruption.]* As is so often the case, what the Secretary of State wants is to give the illusion of compromise without in reality giving anything away and to give the illusion of action without doing anything positive or constructive. The tragedy is that the Secretary of State could speedily bring peace to our schools if he was prepared to accept a new negotiating body for teachers' pay and conditions which would discuss pay and conditions together, and on which the Secretary of State would be properly represented.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): When the hon. Gentleman refers to illusions, does he look on the 16·4 per cent. increase as an illusion?

Mr. Radice: I have often said to the Secretary of State that if only that offer had been made two years ago we would not have the current problem.

The Tories have been in government for quite a long time and they have made a terrible hash of the education service. It is because the Secretary of State still insists of depriving teachers of their bargaining rights and because he seeks instead to impose his will that I shall be asking my colleagues to vote for our prayer tonight.

9.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this prayer and put right a catalogue of union-inspired confusion and fallacies.

I am grateful to Her Majesty's Opposition for giving me this opportunity by praying against the first order under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act. That decision is confusing, and the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr Radice) referred to it at the beginning of his speech.

The Opposition are praying against the first stage of a 16·4 per cent. pay increase. The order — which the Opposition will be voting against—will enable teachers to get substantial back pay, ranging from some £300 for a teacher on the top of scale 1 to £600 for some deputy heads, in their pay packets within weeks. There is no other way of getting this money into teachers' pockets. I want the many teachers I meet to get this substantial increase as the just reward for the enthusiasm and conscientiousness with which they do their jobs.

The ordinary teachers' first concern remains to give their pupils a good education and a good start in life. That is why the Government have moved to give teachers such a big increase—16·4 per cent. this year with an overall 25 per cent. average increase in the 18 months between March 1986 and October 1987. From October a good honours graduate will start on £175 a week and after two years will receive nearly £200 a week. The many teachers now stuck at the top of scale 1 on £9,800 will be able to progress up a scale running to £13,300.

Opportunities for allowances above that will be expanded. Today, 30 per cent. of primary school teachers and 45 per cent. of secondary school teachers are on scale 3 or above, or are heads and deputies. Under our plans these figures will go up to 50 and 60 per cent. by September 1990. The first 25,000 new allowances of £500 will come on stream this October. They are part of a reform that is designed to make teaching a more dynamic, rewarding and attractive career.

The appeal is working. Good news gets through, despite the propaganda of the unions, I am talking about the recruitment figures for teacher training. Applications for this September are up by 14 per cent. Even better news: applications for maths teachers are up by 42 per cent.; for physics teachers 80 per cent.; for CDT a staggering 92 per cent.—and this while the unions are peddling stories of gloom and doom.

How interesting it is that poor pay no longer features in the unions' campaigns. They know that it is not on to tell the British public how hard done by one is when one has received a 25 per cent. rise in 18 months. If they had any illusions on that score, they will have been shattered by the recent MORI poll, which showed that parents do not think that teachers are underpaid. As I have always said, I want teachers to be well paid. If the pay is OK, the unions have to look elsewhere for a campaigning issue. They have been developing a string of fallacious arguments with which I shall deal tonight. Four of the seven fallacies were repeated by the hon. Member for Durham, North.

Fallacy number one is that disruption is Baker's fault. The unions really must think that parents have very short memories. When was it that one of the two militant unions was not disrupting our schools? They have been at it on and off for years. Do they really think that we have forgotten their endless campaigns—the half-day strikes, the disgraceful ten-minute withdrawals of labour, the refusals to cover, the refusals to attend parents' meetings and so on?

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

Question again proposed.

Mr. Baker: As I was saying, I do not cause teachers to disrupt; the union leaders issue the orders. It is tortuous logic to pretend that one does not cause what one commands. The half-day strikes taking place in 10 local education authorities this week are the direct consequence of actions taken by the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers. The strikes are totally unjustified.

The second fallacy is that Baker's contract will choke off good will. The order clarifies the range of duties teachers can be called upon to carry out. It is based closely on the proposals developed in the ACAS talks. For the great majority of conscientious teachers these duties will mean little, if any, change from what they have been doing for years. In an ideal world, there would be no need to spell out a profession's duties in this way. We had to go down this path because of the way in which the unions repeatedly exploited the lack of clarity in teachers' contracts. It is a travesty that the unions should suddenly forget the disruptive use they have been making for years of so-called "withdrawals of good will". The order is a major step forward in protecting parents and pupils from these abuses. Certainly parents will not understand or forgive teachers for clock-watching when they know that the required hours are far from onerous. Teachers will work under the direction of the head for 1,265 hours over 39 weeks of the year.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the teachers' strike has resulted in a considerable waste of resources which would otherwise have been devoted to the benefit of pupils? Will he make it his business to estimate the cost of the wasted resources to the nearest thousand million?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend that the strikes have wasted resources. But they have wasted something more precious — the opportunities for children. It is always difficult to recapture those opportunities. I repeat that the strikes are unjustified.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Can my right hon. Friend tell the House how he will ensure that the Inner London Education Authority applies these conditions to the Inner London Teachers Association?

Mr. Baker: I have just been talking about how endemic disruption has become in certain areas. In many parts of inner London disruption has become a way of life for many teachers. Many children are sent home day in, day out, week in, week out because in parts of London the ILTA has taken over the running of the education service. That is totally and utterly unacceptable.

[Mr. Baker]

The third fallacy, repeated by the hon. Member for Durham, North, is that I overturned a freely negotiated agreement. What agreement? The so-called ACAS agreement contained a little mentioned clause. Roughly translated, it said "We"—that is two of the six unions, not the other four, and the Labour and alliance employers, not the Conservatives—"agree subject to Mr. Baker providing the money". I had already put up £608 million of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money. But Burnham negotiators have Burnham ways. "More," they said—£85 million more for pay and over £100 million more for changes in working conditions. They knew it was not on, but Burnham cultivated gestures rather than realistic negotiations. So they got up an agreement — a conditional pay deal. It was bizarre then. It is even more bizarre now when one of the non-signatory unions—the NAS-UWT — proclaims the virtues of this so-called negotiated agreement. It was not a party to it. It sat on the sidelines prepared to take any advantage that came out of the talks without participating in the negotiations.

The fourth fallacy — also mentioned by the hon. Member for Durham, North—is that all would be well if Baker gave the unions their negotiating rights back. It is typical that there should be a move to fundamental rights. What about practical reality? The reality was Burnham, which was utterly discredited as a negotiating body. In the years 1974 to 1986 Burnham delivered only four negotiated settlements. In other years there were special awards, so in the last 12 years there were only——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are used to hearing a smear a day from the Labour party, but, so that we can hear the rest of the debate, would you be kind enough, in the immortal words of the Leader of the Opposition, to tell the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) to shut up?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The Chair deprecates sedentary comments and interventions.

Mr. Baker: I was on the point of saying that in the 12 years from 1974 to 1986 only four settlements were negotiated by Burnham. In the other eight years there were either special awards, arbitrations or pay policy prescriptions. In its final months, Burnham needed the prop of ACAS to stagger from endless meeting to meeting. Always the inter-union rivalry and the battle for members took precedence over the search for a sensible negotiated agreement. As one union leader admitted, commenting on the Burnham machinery, some unions used Burnham as a recruiting tent rather than as a negotiating body. Let there be no mistake: Burnham had become the misuse rather than the exercise of negotiating rights.

The fifth fallacy, repeated by the hon. Member of Durham, North tonight, is that I have excluded the unions. The teachers' unions have a real, important part in the new, strictly temporary arrangements set up by the Act. The Act was the product of 50 hours of debate. There was no guillotine, and we accepted 13 amendments——

Mr. Radice: In the other House.

Mr. Baker: —here, and in the other House. We are a bicameral legislature.

One of the amendments that we accepted includes "interim" in the title of the body. The Act requires me to set up an interim advisory committee to consider teachers' pay and conditions. The committee will be appointed in the summer and will be made up of indpendent people. It will be responsible for advising on the April 1988 pay settlement. Given the divisions between the various parties on what should be the long-term replacement of Burnham, I do not see any way in which we can get an agreement with legislation enacted in time for April 1988. That is not realistic.

What is realistic is for the unions to take part in the interim arrangements. They have an important part in the process. I wish to remind the House of the involvement of the unions in the process. They will give evidence to the committee in the full glare of publicity, and they will be consulted on the committee's recommendations. Those are the union's statutory rights. They would serve their members better by preparing to use them effectively instead of by pretending that they have been completely cut out of the action.

Another of the accusations made by the hon. Member for Durham, North constituted the sixth fallacy—that Baker's interim means for ever. Interim means what it says. The Act set up temporary arrangements, and it expires in 1990. When procedures produce chaos and breakdown, one replaces them. If there is no agreement on what to replace them with, one goes for a short-term solution that will give everyone time in which to work together on the long-term solution. That is what we have done, and that is the purpose of the interim advisory committee. So far, the two big unions have merely repeated that they know the solution: to set up a joint negotiating council. That, however, amounts to Burnham revisited, and I am not prepared to go back to that. We need some real thought, real reflection and real analysis to find a long-term solution that is fair not only to teachers, but to parents, taxpayers, ratepayers and, above all, children. It is not simply a question of one group's rights. It is a question of finding machinery which fairly reflects the genuine interests of all these groups.

The interim advisory committee will provide us with a breathing space to work out effective permanent machinery. I have made it clear that I do not want to be the determiner of teachers' pay. I and my colleagues intend to enter into detailed discussions later in the year with all those with an interest, including the teacher unions, the local authority associations and the churches. I also want to find a way of bringing in the views of parents. This consultation will get under way early in the autumn.

The hon. Member for Durham, North says that I am putting it off. I remind him that I invited all the unions to come and see me to discuss the details of the order that is now before the House. Two of the unions that now recommend disruption refused to come and talk, but the other four unions did come.

To assist in this important process of consultation, the Government will publish a Green Paper surveying the issues and setting out a variety of alternative possible solutions. This document will carefully examine all the options and consider their relative merits. It will look at statutory and non-statutory negotiations. It will look at possible developments from the interim advisory committee machinery. It will also examine suggestions for separate arrangements for heads and deputy heads.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the Minister please tell the House whether he has a target date by which he

wishes to see the replacement full-scale mechanism in place? Secondly, will he assure the House that he expects that within that mechanism the teachers' right to negotiate their own pay and conditions will be restored?

Mr. Baker: I can answer that point specifically. I have already said that I do not believe that it will be possible to find an agreement between the various interests for the April 1988 settlement. As I have said, that is because there are very deep differences of opinion. I am aware of the alliance proposals. They are for a form of independent review body coupled with a form of negotiations—a mixture of both systems, as I understand it. We must try to be fair to the alliance. Its proposals have been developed since they were debated in the Lords. That proposal needs the most careful consideration and will be considered in our Green Paper.

I do not think that it will be possible to get an agreed new permanent machinery by April 1988. However, that does not mean that we will not be able to get it in place by April 1989—that is, before 1990—and we must strive to do that.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend say whether he envisages a final end to majority voting in the successor to the Burnham committee as a means of achieving agreement more simply? Does he envisage separate negotiations for heads and deputy heads?

Mr. Baker: The Green Paper will set out the points for and against separate negotiations for heads and deputy heads. The largest head teachers' union, the National Association of Head Teachers, has put to me strongly the view that it would like heads to have a separate negotiating arrangement. That view is not shared by the smaller heads' union or, I believe, by the two other larger unions, although they have not been to see me about it.

The case for separating the determination of an ordinary teacher's pay from a head teacher's pay needs the most careful consideration. There is a strong case for it, but it has to be set out. If I were to announce that that is what I favour, I can assure my hon. Friend that several of the unions would say that they would not accept it because it had been put forward by the Government. We have to go through a process of consultation with interests wider than just the unions. There will have to be consultations with the local education authorities, with teachers and with parents.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, as I was told only on Saturday morning by a teacher, it is not just the long-haired, bearded, corduroy brigade that represents the teachers of this country? Many people are tired of teachers thinking that their job is to represent activist teachers and not to attend to the problems of students? Does my right hon. Friend accept that, if we are to get teaching right in this country, it has to be on the basis of what is good for children, not what is good for teachers who want to be political activists more than they want to be teachers?

Mr. Baker: That is absolutely right. The difference between the union militants and activists and the bulk of the profession is vast. It is a huge gulf and we all know from our own experiences that the sorts of teachers we meet in schools we visit are very different from those we see on the television screen during union conferences. The prime consideration in all of this must be the welfare of the children. I do not believe that parents, or the country, accept that teachers are justified in walking out on their obligations and disrupting schools.

I was dealing with the various issues that could be covered in the Green Paper. The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations has suggested a review body. The alliance has suggested the variation of a review body with some sort of negotiation or pendulum arbitration. The Association of Municipal Authorities wrote to me last week suggesting a national joint council, recognising that it would have to take account of my statutory duties and powers in respect of school teachers.

That takes me back to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) made about majority voting, that with a national joint council one has to face head on the relative voting strengths of the various unions, their respective influence and authority, and their changing memberships. The membership of the two most militant unions is declining and the membership of the less militant unions is now rising. One also has to examine and determine the exact role of the Government because they still provide about 46 per cent. of the money.

The list I have just set out gives some idea of the wide range of possibilities and it shows the need to balance carefully the different interests of six unions, the local authority associations, the voluntary schools and parents, and the taxpayers, who must not be forgotten.

Because of the firmly entrenched and conflicting views about the best course of action for the future, general agreement involving the whole of the education service and the Government will not be easy to achieve. However, let my commitment to this consultation exercise put to rest the claim of the unions that the temporary machinery will be there fore ever.

I again make clear that the holder of my office would not want to be the determiner of teachers' pay and conditions. I am simply not prepared to lurch back into a form of Burnham. We have an opportunity now to find a long-term permanent arrangement that will be more effective than Burnham.

The last fallacy again was not touched upon by the hon. Member for Durham, North, because I do not believe that he favours disruption in our schools. The fallacy of the two union leaders is that they must disrupt because they have no choice. That is utter nonsense. It completely ignores the constructive path to be followed. We should use the breathing space granted by the interim advisory committee to work out a new, effective, long-term way of settling teachers' pay and conditions. Certainly more than half of the parents polled by MORI thought that teachers should not disrupt. Unions should abandon this negative, harmful course. The public relations officer of the NCPTA is now telling teachers that sympathy with them is not widespread among parents.

The public relations officer said:

"Threats of further disruption shock parents to the core."

The suggestion that parents would support strikes against their own children is a delusion.

I believe that most ordinary teachers consider that they have now been fairly treated as regards pay and conditions of employment. I understand their concern about permanent machinery. However, I ask the individual teacher to accept the necessity of the interim advisory committee as a temporary arrangement. We cannot just go back to the chaos of Burnham. We must be open-minded

[Mr. Baker]

about devising effective long-term machinery. It is very important that all teachers should fully understand the present positon and the Government's intentions. I shall write to all head teachers during the next few days setting out the key points I have put to the House today.

I hope that over the months ahead agreement can be reached by all parties. But I must ask union and local authority leaders to be open-minded and not hidebound by past arrangements. They must realise that if there is a lesson to be learned from recent years it is that we cannot go back to a revamped Burnham.

In the meantime, I urge all teachers to put once again the care and education of children first. Their passage through the education system is a once-only lifetime chance. Their performances in the examinations many of them are shortly to take will have crucial effects on their future. I have pledged to resolve the question of future pay determination for teachers. I ask teachers to pledge the restoration of uninterrupted education for our nation's children.

10.21 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The atmosphere in the House is somewhat excitable tonight — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) is clearly as excited as all his colleagues. Whether that is boyish enthusiasm for the forthcoming general election or the result of an over-generous dinner I shall leave future *Hansard* readers to decide for themselves.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not mind the boyish enthusiasm, but the inference that I have had over too good a dinner when I have only ate here in my view is outrageous.

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that *Hansard* will carry my report in full and leave future readers to draw their own conclusions. I hope also that it will carry the hon. Gentleman's precise words because his grammar left as much to be desired as his sense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us get back to teachers' pay and conditions.

Mr. Ashdown: I am happy to do that.

I listened with care——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not think that it was allowable for another hon. Member to impute the honour or grammar of any other Member. I find it extremely offensive that the hon. Gentleman has said that my grammar is not as good as what his is. I take great offence at that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can defend an hon. Member's honour, but not his grammar.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman does far too good a job imputing his own grammar to leave it to me.

I listened with great care to the speech of the Secretary of State. I remark merely that the national press has widely leaked the prospect of some great concession, some new initiative, that the Secretary of State is about to launch that would assist in the solution of the trench warfare that is now continuing in our schools—for which, let me be clear, the unions have a responsibility to bear. I believe that it was a silly and stupid action. It is my message—I believe that it is widely felt outside the House—that the Secretary of State has to bear some of the blame for the present situation because of the way in which he has managed the affair.

We sat on the edge of our chairs waiting for the great initiative to arrive—I wonder whether that is the right way to run such affairs—but, of course, nothing at all happened. There was some slight moderation in the tone, to which I shall refer later, but no prospect of any initiative to break the log-jam and deadlock that is now inflicting disruption upon our schools.

From the earliest days we said that the real issue in this dispute would never be pay: it was the removal from teachers of the right to negotiate pay and conditions. When that was said, it was greeted with some derision by the Minister and other Government Members, but so it has proved and so it remains today.

This order will put into effect legislation which has passed this House for the teachers' pay rise. For that reason, I agree with the Minister that it would be difficult to oppose the order and therefore to deny teachers the pay rise which has been granted, rather than negotiated. I am glad of this debate, because it enables us to make some broader comments about the handling of this sorry affair.

I do not seek, nor have I ever sought, to deny the Minister the right to impose a solution if the situation had come to pass that schools and the education system, therefore our children, were being damaged. We do not deny him that right, but whether or not this is the moment to do it is a matter of judgment. Any Secretary of State who had a proper regard for the democratic process and fundamental civil liberties, particularly of those 400,000 teachers who have held that right since 1919, would, at the moment he took that power to impose, have sought also to put in place some solid mechanism to replace those rights. If, when the Minister had taken that power, he had said, "I only want to have it and this is the time when it will come to an end," and had given some idea of how the negotiating right would be replaced, he would not have had this dispute on his hands or, if he had a dispute, the Left-wing extremist teachers—we saw many of them on the rostrums at the teachers' conference—would have been isolated and standing alone.

The Minister has created an issue about civil liberties —it has always been about that—which has unified the teachers across their unions and has driven the moderates into the hands of the extremists, instead of isolating the latter to bring peace to our schools. I have come to the conclusion that the extremists and the Secretary of State need each other. He needs the extremists to give him the votes at the ballot box, which he has been seeking in the way he has pursued this dispute; and they need him to give them a cause to unify the teachers' unions and put the moderates behind the extremists. They need and deserve each other.

Mr. Greenway: Will the hon. Gentleman explain, when he talks of moderate teachers being driven into the hands of the extremists, why the Professional Association of Teachers and AMMA have grown at the rate they have in such a short time?

Mr. Ashdown: I draw the hon. Member's attention to the fact that when the members of AMMA came to discuss this action in the lobby in the House of Commons, they were united with the NUT and the NAS-UWT. It may be

that they did not decide to strike, but they voted with them in their opposition to the withdrawal of their rights to negotiate pay and conditions.

The hon. Gentleman will also know as well as I do—at least, he should, given his background—that there are many moderate members of the NUT and the NAS-UWT. Their instinct is not to strike but they have been driven to support those Left-wing extremist calls that we heard so clearly at the teachers' conferences only a matter of weeks ago.

The hon. Gentleman must have received the same sort of letters that I have received from moderate teachers in the NUT and the NAS-UWT who are desperate about taking this action but who feel that they have no other way in which to defend their civil liberties. He will know the heart-searching that is going on. Conservative Members are shaking their heads, but all hon. Members who are interested and involved in education will have received such letters from moderate teachers belonging to those two unions, expressing their deep concern about taking the only action that they feel is open to them to preserve their civil liberties. Those are the people whom the Secretary of State has driven into the arms of the extremists. He has provided the one unifying call which was possible under the circumstances.

I pleaded with the Secretary of State in a letter of 5 April, as did my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party, to make some move. We gave him a number of options. He could have published a programme of how he saw matters developing in the restoration of those rights. He could even have published his own proposals. He could have taken any action to make sure that the teachers understood that he was committed to the restoration of their rights in the end.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is simply not the case that the unions are united against the Government's proposals. Four of the unions have come out clearly against disruption. They are consulting and discussing with me. They have come in to discuss the order. I have just issued a further draft order and invited all the unions to discuss that with me. I have already received representations from two of the unions. I very much hope that the other two large unions will do so. Nor must the hon. Gentleman exaggerate the extent of disruption in our schools. Well under 1 per cent. of our schools have been disrupted.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the right hon. Gentleman want more?

Mr. Baker: I certainly do not want more, and I trust that no one in the House wants more. What I have suggested tonight is a path of discussion instead of disruption.

Mr. Ashdown: The Secretary of State should not misunderstand coming in to talk to him as support for his actions. There is a fundamental difference between the two. I very much hope that other unions will also come in to have discussions with him. But let us not misinterpret such actions as supporting his action in withdrawing their civil liberties. That is a misjudgment of the events, and the right hon. Gentleman knows it.

I make the point that I made clearly in my letter in April, which was also made by my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party, that the end of the dispute is in the Secretary of State's hands. If he takes concrete action to lay down a programme for the restoration of teachers' rights, or puts forward his own proposals, the disruption will swiftly come to an end; what would then happen is what should have happened previously, and the extremists in both the unions would be isolated.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: No, the hon. Gentleman must forgive me. I have given way three times and I should like to make a few more points before I sit down.

The Secretary of State has consistently refused to take such action. He has consistently refused to show much leadership. Therefore, we can only assume that he is more interested in playing party politics for votes than in bringing peace to our schools.

We now note some slight amelioration in tone. There have been no positive proposals, but there has been some slight amelioration in tone. One wonders why. Again, the answer is votes.

There is no doubt that the public have rumbled the Secretary of State. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may shout in derision, but they have only to look at the opinion polls. That is what is driving the Secretary of State. I will put this point on the record. The opinion polls on the education issue and about who is responsible for the dispute show that many of the public the Secretary of State knows this—put the blame fairly and squarely where it belongs, at least in part—with the Secretary of State.

Conservative Members do not need to look at those polls. They can look at the *Daily Mail*, *the Daily Telegraph* or *The Times* last week and see that in the serious press the Secretary of State got some of the worst press for his part in this dispute that a Conservative Secretary of State has had for many years. There is no use dodging that. That is what has caused some softening. There are no concrete proposals, of course, I suspect that the Secretary of State has delivered too little too late.

Mr. Greenway: What would the hon. Gentleman's party do?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman asks what I should like to tell him—what we propose. Before I tell him, I shall enter this warning: there are two elements to the order. One is pay. We would not vote against it—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Conservative Members obviously have not been listening. I said early in my speech that we will not vote against the order, because it gives the teachers their pay rise.

There is a second — *[Interruption.]* This is a short debate, but I will be heard if I have to repeat what I say several times. There is a second element to the order. It is certain conditions which are now to be followed by teachers. I do not mind if the Secretary of State has 15, 50 or 50,000 conditions. He knows as well as I do that, however many conditions he may have, he cannot define the duties, responsibilities and work of a teacher, unless he has the good will to put it into practice. It does not matter how many conditions he imposes. He has lost that good will. I suspect that those conditions will return to haunt him. There are many in the teaching profession who will follow those conditions to the letter and use that mechanism and the statutory instrument to disrupt schools.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) asked what our proposals are. They are clear. They are laid

[Mr. Ashdown]

down. The Secretary of State knows them. He referred to them clearly enough. If the hon. Member for Ealing, North wishes——

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Who supports them?

Mr. Ashdown: I shall come to that in a moment. If hon. Gentlemen wish, I can take another 10 minutes in this short debate to explain them again. I should like to give their ingredients. First, they will return the rights to negotiate pay and conditions for teachers. Secondly, they will establish a mechanism for unblocking blockages in negotiations. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen may laugh, but I shall explain later why they would be well advised not to rubbish them too far. Thirdly, our proposals will provide a framework for negotiations. Fourthly, they will encourage the unions and the local education authorities to speak with a single voice. Fifthly, they will give a legitimate and proper role to the Secretary of State. I recognise that neither Burnham nor the joint negotiating council did that, as the right hon. Gentleman rightly said. Sixthly, they will enable some kind of ultimate solution — *[Interruption.]* — to be enacted, if necessary — *[Interruption.]* I do not mind how long this disruption continues. I will make my points heard. It is of no consequence to me if Conservative Members intervene. It is their debate. If they want to speak in it later, perhaps they will listen.

Our proposals will allow for a process of pendulum arbitration to achieve a final solution. *[Interruption.]* I can hear Conservative Members doing their best to shout down our proposals. They laugh, but perhaps they should laugh on the other side of their faces. I make this prediction: when the Secretary of State comes up with his final solution, it is likely to be very close to what we have just suggested. He knows that very well. That is why— Conservative Members might note this—he gave it a cautious welcome in his speech. We have not found the right hon. Gentleman taking the same attitude as other Conservative Members.

Those who support these proposals include many whom the Secretary of State has prayed in aid on many occasions. These proposals, first put forward in the other place, are supported in broad outline by the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations, the National Association of Head Teachers, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Professional Association of Teachers and the Secondary Heads Association. All those moderate unions—*[Interruption.]*—to which the Secretary of State referred, unions whose opinions in the past he has said he values, support them. But we know —*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Back-Bench Members complained when the Secretary of State appeared not to be getting a fair hearing. I hope they will have in mind the complaints they made then and will give the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) a fair hearing equal to that for which they were asking.

Mr. Ashdown: It is their own debate that Conservative Members are interrupting, so it worries me not in the slightest if they prolong my speech.

It is evident in the House, in the serious press and among the public at large that the Secretary of State has been rumbled. He has failed in his job to lead the education service out of this dispute. He could have done so; the power to do it was in his hands. Indeed, his actions are seen by many as a contribution to the continuing disruption in the schools. He has been discovered as rather too slick and ambitious for the nation's good. He has been found out.

We shall not oppose the order, because the right hon. Gentleman has shown at least some movement and because it institutes the new pay deal. But we do so for this year alone, and we demand that the right hon. Gentleman now puts schools before his own and his party's electoral advantage. He must now move substantially, as he can, to end the dispute without further delay.

10.43 pm

Sir William van Straubenzee (Wokingham): It is easy in a complicated situation such as this to postulate a number of general principles of total acceptability and say that because that is the path one wants to follow, that is the way forward. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) should accept that that is similar to saying of sin that we are all against it; at least, we all have to say we are against it.

I have little doubt that the hon. Gentleman is right and that when eventually the Secretary of State's proposals emerge, after extensive consultation, they will contain a number of the points he made, simply because no sensible set of proposals could avoid doing so, being in general principle the sort that we are all anxious to see. I draw the line, though, at unblocking blockages. He is not the type of doctor in whose hands I should like to find myself, and I was not sure what he had in mind in his references to blockages.

The hon. Gentleman underestimates the present problem in relation to the sheer unwieldiness of the immediate past Burnham machinery. I was glad to hear my right hon. Friend say that he had no intention of toppling back into that machinery. It is hopelessly unwieldy, and let us remember the essential weaknesses associated with it. As it grew, like Topsy, it was dominated until recently by one union, which itself was dominated by electoral considerations of numbers—that is, the broad numbers of largely junior teachers. Therefore, there was inbuilt opposition to any arrangement that would make special provision for shortage subjects, for example, for special skills or for special responsibilities.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a great opportunity that I should like to outline briefly in what can be only a short debate. First, the blame must be laid firmly where it belongs. My right hon. Friend and his predecessor have taken a good deal of stick in the debate, and that is fair in an assembly of this sort, but the main blame for the position in which we find ourselves lies in the leadership of the two main teacher unions. Any observer who has watched the scene for a number of years will be saddened that the two main unions are led by pygmies. Some of us look back and remember great names such as Gould, Britton and Casey. I pause for a moment to mark Mr. Casey's recent death, which caused great sadness to a wide range of individuals who did not share his views. These were big men, and no one could say that they sat in the lap of or were subject to the diktat of, the Department of Education and Science. No one could say, either, that they did not represent their membership. Unfortunately, strident trade unionism has led us away

month by month from the commitment to professionalism, which must surely be the way in which in future the education service is administered.

I speak harshly this evening because I wish my contribution to the debate to reflect my strong feelings. Much of the industrial disruption that took place last year was because the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers had to prove his virility and his claim to office in the TUC. That is the reality. We know — hon. Members on both sides of the House have the connections that enable them to know that this is so—that many of his members are deeply unhappy with his actions and are leaving the union. Hon. Members are not the only people who have contacts. There are important members of the general secretary's headquarters who are deeply unhappy about and concerned with his strategy.

No trade union can overturn the elected will of the House that is set out in a measure that has been enacted by Parliament. Those teachers who are conducting the present campaign had better understand clearly that the relevant Act remains upon the statute book and that no amount of disruption will have it repealed by the presently constituted House, or any other House.

It is right that teaching is often referred to as a profession, but the dreadfully sad truth is that in Britain it is not. The hallmark of a profession is that it is self-governing and self-disciplined, and in this country teaching is neither. There are one or two others in this place who have had the enormous privilege that I have enjoyed of serving in the Department of Education and Science, and who have had the unpleasant task, like those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who now occupy the Treasury Bench, of administering discipline. They are the ultimate court of appeal. I wish to share with the House the anguish that I used to feel—I am sure that it is felt by Ministers of all political persuasions—and the hours that I used to spend upon such matters. I had a feeling of horror that it was upon a Minister that a decision eventually had to rest. Such decisions related to the professional future of a man or woman. In a profession, such matters are determined by the profession itself. We have an opportunity here, as the whole matter is in the melting pot, to create a professional body—if we take some time to do this—which will be self-governing and self-disciplining. It is not without the bounds of possibility that groups within the profession should be specially represented. That applies to other professions.

I accept that there are major decisions for the existing unions and for the Government. It is not impossible that this might require the central employment of teachers, and until now I have considered that with the greatest reluctance. I do not care for moves to centralisation and the centralisation of power. However, as part of the general concept that I have sought briefly to put before the House, central employment may be one of the features, if it was balanced by the professional body of strength, professional power and professionalism, that I envisage for the teaching profession.

Those of us who have never taught and who are not adequate to teach should always remember the demanding nature of the teaching profession. To care for very young children, older children or students, day after day, to give of one's very best, and to remember that one is always in the public eye, always in the front and always to have to give a good or, sadly, a bad example, is mighty demanding. At times, we Conservative Members rightly expressed the strongest views about disruption. We carefully distinguished between the leaders and the followers in those matters. However, our words should never fail to do honour to the many man and women who devotedly, day in and day out in our schools, give their very best to the young people in their care.

10.52 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is always a pleasure to listen to the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee), who chairs the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts very well indeed. Even when we profoundly disagree with what he says, we must — as I always do — listen to his comments with respect and courtesy. However, I hope that parents and teachers will take note that this very serious subject was treated for some time at the beginning of the debate with levity and rowdiness. An attempt was made to stifle the opposing view. I hope that hon. Members will do me the courtesy of listening to the serious view that I want to put forward. The Secretary of State has missed out a great deal which I know that he knows about and I want to raise those points.

The bland and urbane effrontery with which the Secretary of State — his effrontery knows no bounds — treats this subject is angering people and making him vastly unpopular not only with teachers, but with many honourable people who want to see an end to this disruption caused by the Government and by the Secretary of State's attitude.

When the hon. Member for Wokingham invokes the names of Sir Ronald Gould, who, as he knows, died last year and was a great friend of mine, of Ted Britton, who was at the NUT conference this year, and of Terry Casey of the NAS, for whom I had great respect and knew for many years, he missed out an important point in saying that they did not do the things that are being done today. However, there was never any mention of negotiating rights being taken away from their unions. The difference between them and this Government and this Secretary of State is that the Government are doing something which not only the teachers' unions but the entire trade union movement cannot tolerate because the reason for the existence of a union is its negotiating right, and it has a right to negotiate freely—*[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members interrupt me rudely as though I am saying something wrong, in the alphabet of politics they are stumbling over the letter A. The reality is that they will bring into play a vast number of people who, at this stage, are holding their hands. Those people know that if negotiating rights are taken from the teachers, it will next be the civil servants and the public service unions and then an attack on the entire trade union movement, in keeping with the anti-trade union laws.

This discussion is not only about the order; it is an opportunity to discuss something else, using the order as vehicle for so doing. The fundamental problem that we are discussing is the right of a trade union to negotiate freely with its employers. We can never allow that to be taken away from us. It took hundreds of years to get it, and we shall not relinquish it. The Government and the Secretary of State know that as well sa I do.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): What about the children?

Mr. Flannery: The tribute paid in the last sentence of the speech by the hon. Member for Wokingham made it clear that teachers teach because they want to teach children. God knows that there is little enough in it for them. I should like to see some Conservative Members take a class all day for the pittance that the teachers have been getting. However, the issue is no longer about money, nor, temporarily, is it about conditions. It is, as I have said, about the right to negotiate.

In Russia, teachers are only an advisory committee. In Chile, teachers are only an advisory committee. Franco had them as an advisory committee. The incipient and developing tyranny that the arrogance of power among Conservative Members is bringing about is appalling.

We believe in a good education for our children and we need no lectures from those who send their childern to private schools and heap inequity on our children — *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) will not stand up and tell me how many children he has at school. I am interested not in his sexual prowess but in something rather more than that.

In Britain, no previous Government of any political colour has tried to deprive a trade union of its negotiating powers. However, the present Government have retreated from position to position. But for the rudeness of Conservative Members, it would be laughable — those public school louts who do not want to listen to the other case that is being put — that, as the Secretary of State knows, the Government have retreated from position to position. They offered 4 per cent. to the teachers and finished up at 16·4 per cent.

Does the Secretary of State think that the teachers would have got anything more if they had not struggled for the education of children and for a living wage on which to teach them properly? Does he think that the gentlemen with supple spines among the NAHT would have got what they were after without the unions who fought for them? Does he think that PAT members will not eagerly reach out their hands for the money which others have fought, struggled and paid for?

The right hon. Gentleman is welcome to their support because people who pack it in and, with their crocodile tears, intone incantations about how much they love the children are not fit to struggle alongside. To Tory Members who say, "How much we love the children", I say "Come off it. Who do you think you're talking to?" We know how much they love our children when they make the schools miserable places, leave the roofs leaking, provide too few books and deny schools the wherewithal. In posh areas money comes from parents, but children in poor areas must put up with what they can get. That is the reality.

The Government were dragged kicking and screaming to the 16·4 per cent. increase. The Secretary of State, with such blandness, says what a good offer it is, but his predecessor talked in the same way and he was defeated, as this one will be. They thought they could impose their will easily, but they cannot. The Secretary of State's offer has turned out to be a crown of thorns. Today I have spoken to some union leaders, and I warn the right hon. Gentleman in advance that it will not be accepted because he is still depriving teachers of the very thing they need —the right to negotiate freely.

The Secretary of State has never made a bigger mistake. Parents and many others support the teachers. The Government now face an election while they are in a mess about education and the teachers' dispute. That is why the Secretary of State has come here tonight with this so-called olive branch. Three quarters of the teaching profession are solidly against the Government and what is happening to our children's education. The Secretary of State may say

that that does not matter because four unions support his proposals, but those four unions do not represent even a quarter of the profession. Two unions represent three quarters. The Secretary of State should go among them and, instead of arrogantly talking, he should with a little humility try to learn something from them. *[Interruption.]*

The two main unions, the NUT and NAS/UWT——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Earlier Conservative Members below the Gangway called for a fair hearing for the Secretary of State. I hope that they will be prepared to — *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) raised a point of order earlier. It ill behoves him now to ignore the reproach I am levelling at him, among others, that he should be prepared to give to other Members the fair hearing he requested for his Minister.

Mr. Flannery: The NUT and NAS/UWT were backed by their annual conferences of freely elected delegates. That has never been the case at a Tory conference or certain other conferences which I could mention. The delegates were elected properly and democratically which is something that the Tory party will never understand, despite its immense propaganda machine. At those conferences an overwhelming majority voted to carry out industrial action. Then — this is something that the Secretary of State never told the House, so I shall—as I told the Secretary of State the other day when he brushed it off in his usual casual, arrogant way, thereby deepening his dilemma, those two unions wrote to the Prime Minister, asking to meet her to discuss free negotiating rights for the unions. She replied that she found it surprising that the two unions should want to have a meeting now as both unions had refused the invitation from the Secretary of State for Education and Science to discuss the draft order on teachers' pay and conditions.

That is totally untrue, and, like most of the material in the letter, it is a distortion of reality.

The Minister knows as well as I do that what the unions wanted to discuss with him and the Prime Minister was not wages and conditions but negotiating rights, and that is why he will not speak to them. He is willing to speak about water that has gone under the bridge, but the fundamental problem that we now face is the disruption of our children's education by the Minister and the Government, not by us.

Nobody wants to teach the children more than the teachers. One could not be a teacher if one did not want honourably to teach children. Anybody who thinks that one can go into a classroom and teach without having a great affection for the children is dreaming. Conservative Members have had teachers. They know that their teachers did not receive vast salaries and that they taught because they wanted to do so.

The abuse that I have received from Conservative Members characterises their attitude towards this subject. They do not regard it with proper seriousness. I hope that that gets into the press so that everybody knows it. Some Conservative Members genuinely and honourably want to solve this problem, but members of the ultra-Right wing that is in command of the Tory party do not want to solve it, and one begins to wonder whether they want the disruption to children's education which they have caused in the last couple of years.

11.5 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) asked whether Conservative Members wanted to solve this dispute. We all want to solve this dispute, and that has not only been the case tonight. Conservative Members have made many suggestions as to how the dispute could be solved.

This is a short debate, so I will make only a couple of points. First, I detected from what the hon. Member for Hillsborough said that he welcomed the pay agreement but that he was dissatisfied about negotiating rights. I hope that he will realise that, as we are in negotiation, there should be give and take. The unions that are in dispute with the Government could at least say that they will protect O-level classes for this term. It is the last year of the O-level examination. It is an exceptionally important examination which will weigh heavily with employers as we move to a new system. The least that we could expect at this stage of the problem is that the O-level classes will be protected.

Secondly, while the teaching unions are in dispute they should look for some outside advice, because they are trying to set up a new negotiating system, which many firms and industries are constantly doing. I and my hon. Friends have said to the unions, "Why do you not seek advice from firms, employers' organisations and the Industrial Society, which for years have spent their time creating new negotiating machinery?" The unions should be seen to be coming forward with constructive ideas, not just blazing away at the Government and saying that the Government are half-hearted about negotiations.

As to the order, I shall make one point. In the section on cover and in the section on working time there are two matters which rely on good will. There is what I would call the "three-day rule" under "cover." In that section it says that cover will not be provided,

"unless — it is not reasonably practicable for the maintaining authority to provide a supply teacher to provide cover".

Under "Working time" section 4(f) says that a teacher will,

"work such additional hours as may be needed to enable him to discharge effectively his professional duties."

Paragraph (f) goes on to say that duties,

"shall not be defined by the employer but shall depend upon the work needed to discharge the teacher's duties."

One of the many constructive matters that the Government have done for the education service in the last eight years has been massively to strengthen and improve the curriculum and pour millions of pounds into it so that it is better planned and better constructed to give young people a better chance when they leave school. The professional duties of teachers require that they make the new curriculum effective. Any argument about cover and working time—and there is bound to be some argument as we are in new territory—should always bear in mind that the new and improved curriculum is what matters in teachers' duties. If the curriculum takes root we shall have better opportunities for young people when they leave school. A new examination system is coming in. Above all, we shall have a greater recognition of teachers' professionalism if they work the new curriculum well.

I appeal to the teachers when considering this statutory instrument to bear in mind, if they have problems over cover and working time, that what matters most is that the

[Mr. David Madel]

vastly improved curriculum is made effective. I appeal to them to work the new document in the spirit in which it is written, which is asking for constructive negotiation with the teaching profession.

11.10 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I have listened to the whole debate. I came here expecting the statement from the Secretary of State for Education and Science that has been advertised in some of the prior comments about the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) suggested that he, too, came to the debate hoping that, despite all the events of the past, the Secretary of State would make at least some gesture. I have been following the debate to see whether that would happen.

Anyone who has followed the dispute must recognise that some of the fault lies with the Minister and with the Government. To suggest, as some of the more raucous Tory Members have done in interruptions, that all the blame rests with the trade unions, is absurd. The hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) made comments on the personalities. He is a fair-minded person and I do not think he could possibly try to load all the responsibility for the dispute on to one or two leaders of the two main unions. Of course, they have been responding to their members. Anyone who followed the dispute could see how they were representing their members, especially at the recent conferences. It is utter absurdity for the Government to try to pretend at this eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth or whatever hour that all the blame rests with the unions.

Like others, I came to see whether the Secretary of State at this stage in the proceedings had learned the beginnings of humility, which for him would be the first step back on the road of wisdom. If only he had had the humility to say, "Maybe I did make a mistake; maybe I am not so knowledgeable about the whole educational world," he could have made a gesture and started back on the road to sensible negotiation.

The right hon. Gentleman must recognise that it is not only the teachers and the teacher unions who have been up in arms. I do not know whether hon. Members have read the debate in another place about universities in which eminent leaders representing all the universities said that, after six or seven years of this Government having been in power, the morale among university teachers was at rock bottom. Anyone can see the appalling state of affairs in many universities, including Cardiff. The Government have made a few monetary gestures over the last few weeks. Although anything is welcome, they have not cured the appalling position in universities and the desperately lowered morale in education which they have piled up in the last seven or eight years.

The same is true of the rest of the educational system. There has been a lowering of standards, of morale and of the teaching being given to the children, chiefly because of the failure of the Government. We thought that, when the new Secretary of State arrived, he might apply to these problems some of the arts of public expression in which he is so proficient. As I said when the right hon. Gentleman was briefly absent, I thought that he might come to the debate and start on the process of trying to repair the present state of affairs. He has failed to do so, and has thereby made matters all the more difficult for himself. Sooner or later, proper, full negotiating rights will be restored to the teaching profession. If the Government agree to that, why do they not say so right away, and move speedily in that direction?

However, the Government have a reserve position—I daresay the Minister is guilty of this too—and believe that there is some political capital to be gained from trying to browbeat the teachers, in the same way that they think that there is capital to be gained from the other sections of the community that they try to browbeat. The right hon. Gentleman should have the nerve and courage to go back to the wretched Tory Cabinet and say that he will start to restore the same negotiating rights to the teaching profession that are enjoyed elsewhere. For a change, he should take back messages from the House of Commons, instead of bringing messages from the Cabinet.

The right hon. Gentleman has so far failed us. I hope that he will pluck up the courage to come forward in the next debate, and it will be better if that is before the election, because it is highly probable that he will have no chance of doing so after it.

11.18 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): It is always a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), if for no other reason than that we attended the same private school. I hope that my children, who attend the local village school, will end up as eloquent as the right hon. Gentleman; I hope to match his eloquence some day, too.

There should be no doubt that hon. Members on both sides of the House want an end of the sordid dispute of the past two years. It is a completely futile waste of time to be striking and demonstrating against a system that failed. If one examines the negotiating rights that are the alleged touchstone of the problem, one finds that they were not exercised, because they did not work. Much more often than not, settlements were reached by being imposed or arbitrated. There was rarely a settlement as a result of the negotiations between the teachers, the local authorities and the paymasters. That was the fatal flaw in the system.

We must therefore look forward. One of the most important features of the instrument that we are debating is the list of the contractual requirements of a schoolteacher. It is a great shame that the teaching profession—of which I still count myself a member—has come to a time when we must list teachers' duties and responsibilities. That has lowered the tone of teachers' professionalism. However, no one should doubt the sincere anger and frustration that is felt throughout the teaching profession about what has happened.

We do not move any further forward by imputing blame to the teachers' unions' leaders or to the Government—some of it will be true. We must get away from all that and look forward to the future. The time-limited Act and the order provide a great opportunity for the teachers' unions and members of the teaching profession who are in such disarray to get their act together, come forward and accept the repeated offer of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to talk and negotiate a new settlement and arrangement for the long term. I believe my right hon. Friend when he says that he wants to see that sooner rather than later. I hope that it will be very soon and certainly within the designated three years.

My right hon. Friend has done a great deal for the teaching profession, if only because he has knocked together certain heads in the profession. I regret that, as usual, it is the children who have suffered. Too often they are left out of the equation from dawn to dusk and beyond. The teachers want to do a professional job and are more and more being blamed for the ills of society. We too readily forget the statistics published by the Department of Education and Science which show that not only are examination results better than they were, but that the general education provided for our children is rapidly increasing. I strongly support the teaching profession. This order must be temporary. The quicker we can get back to an alternative arrangement with full consultation and negotiation the better; but let us use this opportunity positively.

11.20 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I certainly agree with the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) that the quicker we get back to proper negotiations the better. It is sad that we did not have more conciliatory speeches from other hon. Members. I agree with the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) that the Government ought to give careful consideration to the matter of cover. Everyone welcomes the fact that there will now be cover after three days, but that will be practicable only if we address ourselves to the problem of supplying teachers. I plead with the Government to have urgent discussions with the local authorities about how supply cover can be provided in some of the inner-city areas and in London where it is proving difficult to attract supply teachers.

In four minutes I cannot go into much of the detail of the order. It is sad that, although the Secretary of State for Education and Science has been in office for 11 months, he has not dealt with this problem. He came in quite clearly aware that, after seven years of Conservative Government, education was neglected. Even though he knew very little about state education, he must have been conscious that he had to face three major problems — the general certificate of secondary education, resources for higher education and the whole question of teachers' pay. In all that time he has turned most of his attention and most of his officials' time to gimmicks rather than addressing himself to the real problem.

If only the right hon. Gentleman had put half the effort that he has put into the new technology colleges into trying to provide resources for the GCSE, it would have made a tremendous difference. He talked glibly last week about making schools elastic and about taking curriculum away from the experts, the teachers, and giving them back problems of purchasing and he went for a gimmick a day to keep the parents and teachers at bay. If he had not done those things but had addressed the problems of solving the teachers' dispute, he could have produced a solution, as could any Secretary of State worthy of the office.

During the 11 months that he has been in office, the right hon. Gentleman has taken every opportunity to make life more difficult for the local authorities and the teachers' unions. In the negotiations at Coventry and Nottingham, he tended to emphasise the disagreements and when agreements had been reached he talked to each of the unions and tried to encourage them to go back on the discussions that they had had. He went on trying to cause disruption. Then, when he failed to make any progress with the teacher unions or the local authorities, he went for the simple solution of forcing legislation through the House. At this stage, he is still telling us that he has no replacement at all for Burnham.

It is quite clear that people on all sides in the discussions were saying for at least two years that they were dissatisfied with the Burnham procedure. All that the Secretary of State is able to offer us today is a Green Paper in the autumn on possible alternatives. It is amazing that the Secretary of State can spend 11 months looking at this problem and still not come up with any solution to the negotiating problem. He ought to come up far more quickly with an alternative to Burnham. A Green Paper produced 15 or 16 months after the problem landed on his desk is totally unacceptable.

The Secretary of State ought to attempt a quick solution to this dispute. His only other choice continued disruption in the schools. He said that only 2 per cent. of schools were affected and it seemed to me that, from the Dispatch Box, he was daring the teacher unions to increase it. If he does not get disruption, he will get sullen acceptance. He ought to take a little time off from his electioneering and do the positive thing: get the teachers' unions and the local authorities together, produce new negotiating machinery and say that he will restore that procedure. If he did that, he would bring peace back to our schools and ensure that all children benefit from their education rather than being in the centre of continuing conflicts in the running down of our state education system.

11.26 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) mentioned cover. He well knows that some authorities have more generous arrangements for cover. The order enables them to retain such arrangements as they wish because it is a matter for local decision. It is recognised that there are some shortages of supply teachers and that it is not right for children to be sent home because teachers will not cover. That is recognised in the order.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was naive, both in his perception of what has been happening with the teachers' union and also because of what he thought happened in Burnham. It was absolutely right of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) to condemn the whole machinery of the Burnham negotiations. Those negotiations were only about fixed positions, recruitment to particular unions and press headlines. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) was quite right to say that the whole machinery had completely broken down. I know that because, like a very few others in the House, I was on the Burnham committee.

There has been a continuous story of disruption and disunity among the unions. Last autumn, I think it was, the NUT and the AMMA appeared to be acting together. But the AMMA membership voted clearly earlier this year not to pursue strike action. The NAS/UWT is now proclaiming the virtues of a negotiated settlement, yet it consistently refused to put its name to any of the so-called agreements reached in the past nine months.

It is now the so-called "unity" between the NUT and the NAS/UWT that is presented in the headlines. But that

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

unity is fragile. NUT members voted to merge with the NAS/UWT but the NAS/UWT would not even discuss merging with the NUT. The NAS/UWT's annual report to this year's conference, about the NUT's behaviour in 1986 when campaigning against the settlement for 1985, stated:

"The NUT engaged in a vicious and scurrilous campaign to try to persuade NAS/UWT members. Facts were distorted and truth turned upside down by the NUT in their campaign."

At the Easter conferences, both those major unions received wide television and press coverage and most parents and teachers must have been horrified to see the parade of militants on their television screens. The display of militancy and narrow-mindedness can only undermine the esteem in which teachers are held.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) mentioned that my right hon. Friend had not brought any different proposals before the House this evening, but my right hon. Friend announced that the Government are prepared to commit themselves to produce a radical and constructive Green Paper, which I hope will include the suggestions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) and also by my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury.

The hon. Member for Yeovil also made constructive suggestions, which I hope we shall see within the Green Paper, because all those things deserve to be discussed and looked at. Unless the Labour party wants to alienate parents even further, the teachers' unions should be prepared to be equally constructive. They will continue to lose public support if they continue to follow the line of Mr. Smithies, who was quoted recently as saying:

"We are not in the business to damage pupils more than is strictly necessary."

Such threats are totally unacceptable to the public and the parents. The real issue and what the House should hear about tonight is the education of our children being continued full-time within our schools.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 136, Noes 211.

Division No. 158] [11.30 pm

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Ames, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bitten, Rt Hon John
Bigga-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon H. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet

Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fraser, Peter (Angus East)
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter (Portsm'th N)
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. (Epsom)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkesley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Holland, Sir Philip (Gedling)
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. (S'ktford)
Howell, Ralph (Norfolk, N)
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert (Herts W)
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger (B'ham N'field)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John (Pendle)
Leigh, Edward (Gainsbor'gh)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian (Havant)
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew (Berkshire)
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael (Arundel)
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal (B'grove)
Mills, Iain (Meriden)
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David (Hants NW)
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. (Devizes)
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard (Herts SW)
Patten, Christopher (Bath)
Patten, J. (Oxf W & Abgdn)
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William (Corby)
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn (Conwy)
Robinson, Mark (N'port W)
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis (Nuneaton)
Sumberg, David
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald (Calder V)
Thorne, Neil (Ilford S)
Thurnham, Peter
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waltis, John
Wells, Bowen (Hertford)
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Portillo and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Territorial Sea Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, having been signified.]

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I have it in Command from Her Majesty the Queen to acquaint the House that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Territorial Sea Bill *[Lords]*, has consented to place Her prerogative and interest, so far as they are affected by the Bill, at the disposal of Parliament for the purpose of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second reading committees) and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

TERRITORIAL SEA BILL *[LORDS]* (MONEY)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Territorial Sea Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise any increase attributable to any extension by or under that Act of the territorial sea adjacent to the British Islands in the sums charged by any other Act upon the public revenue.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

TERRITORIAL SEA BILL *[LORDS]* (WAYS AND MEANS)

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Territorial Sea Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise any increase attributable to any extension by or under that Act of the territorial sea adjacent to the British Islands in the sums charged by any other Act upon the people. — *[Mr. Boscawen.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

AGRICULUTURE

That the draft Sheep and Goats (Removal to Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 30th March, be approved. — *[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Question agreed to.

HOME AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Tony Lloyd be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee and Mrs. Llin Golding be added.—*[Sir Reginald Eyre, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

M11 (Service Area)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): My purpose in bringing this Adjournment debate to the House is, first, to beg the Minister to find another location for the motorway service area now that the airport at Stansted is to be expanded, and, secondly, to support the provision of a green belt around Bishop's Stortford to give the local council the only planning means of controlling housing and commercial development around Bishop's Stortford.

The motorway service area was located by the Department of Transport long before the Eyre report, which led to the Government's approval of the expansion of Stansted airport, originally proposed at 35 million passengers per annum and now happily restricted to 8 million passengers per annum after the strenuous efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), myself and other hon. Members. Indeed, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that he will be allowed to take part in the debate.

The difficulties caused by the development of the airport and the need for Bishop's Stortford to control its development are very real. Within a few weeks of the declaration of the expansion of Stansted airport, East Herts district council had applications for over 12,000 houses to be built in Bishop's Stortford alone, leaving aside the applications made for developments in areas around Bishop's Stortford, including in areas as far south as Harlow, but including my hon. Friend's constituency of Saffron Walden. That means that we have a serious difficulty in controlling development in the area. If the motorway service area is established in the currently proposed location, it will urbanise the entire area between the town of Bishop's Stortford and the motorway and beyond to the airport. It has always been the ambition of those in our area to create a rural buffer zone between the motorway and the town and between the airport and the town. If this motorway service area is located as proposed, both ambitions will be sacrificed and it will be extremely difficult to impose any control over housing, commercial and industrial development in the area.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will say, "But I have received planning consent from the local councils" — East Hertfordshire district council and Hertfordshire and Essex county councils. He initially received that consent in 1981 before the development of the airport had been agreed. Consequently, because planning approval ran out, the proposal came forward for fresh approval. It was only because of my efforts and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden that the effects of the proposed 28-acre development on the environment were brought to councillors' attention. The East Hertfordshire district council considered the matter and submitted an objection under the compulsory purchase order for some of the land that my hon. Friend needs to build the motorway service area. On 5 February 1987, in a letter to the Department of the Environment from the director of planning of the East Hertfordshire district council, the council listed these reasons;

"It will effectively cause the coalescence of the eastern edge of the town of Bishop's Stortford and the airport.

It has long been the objective of my council to maintain an open area between the town and the M11. The development of a large motorway service area here will defeat this wish. The county structure plan review presently before the Secretary of State proposes an extension of the greenbelt around Bishop's Stortford. The construction of the MSA will be contrary to this intention. There are serious misgivings over the intention to have the MSA served from the Birchanger interchange as there is a risk of traffic congestion being caused on the A120, the nature of which as a bypass to Bishop's Stortford will be seriously compromised. The activity generated by the motorway service area will have a detrimental effect on the residential amenities of the nearby dwellings.

We understand that both Essex county council and Hertfordshire county council are troubled about the proposal from a traffic point of view and are re-appraising the proposal at the present time. This lends credence to the view that there is a considerable risk inherent in placing this facility in the position proposed. My council urges on the Secretary of State the need to review the whole principle of the motorway service area in this location and strongly suggests that an alternative site be investigated, possibly served directly from the M11 on its eastern side. If the Secretary of State concludes that he should hold a public local inquiry, my council will wish to have the opportunity to appear before it to expand these views and to add such additional comments relating to the planning issues as may be appropriate."

That is the considered view of the East Hertfordshire district council and of the two other councils from which I understand my hon. Friend the Minister has had approval.

I understand that my hon. Friend is reluctant to consider alternative sites because of the difficulties that he is likely to incur in terms of planning and getting approval. That is understandable, but I have asked him to consider this matter afresh because he received approval long before the airport was suggested. It flies in the face of common sense to intensify development and traffic congestion in that area and on the M11 where, I believe, there will be serious build-ups of traffic trying to use that interchange on its way to the airport and to the motorway service area.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will think afresh about these matters and that he will agree to an inquiry in relation to the compulsory purchase order. That will be the only opportunity for the district council, the county councils, the environmentalists and the town dwellers of Bishop's Stortford truly to put forward their considered views and objections to this proposal. I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that he considers those views. I am sure that when he sees the commonsense reasons why this development should not occur, he will change his mind. If my hon. Friend insists that there must be this interchange, I would very much regret that. But I suggest that my hon. Friend place the motorway service area on the other side of the interchange, in the airport area, because there is a large acreage there and it would not impinge on residential development in Bishop's Stortford.

With only a fence and perhaps a few trees separating them, my constituents would have lorries parked overnight — possibly refrigerated lorries having their motors running the whole time—and the area would no doubt be brightly lit to prevent burglaries and other crime. This development is totally unacceptable close to a residential area. The whole problem would be solved if it were put on the airport land, and that would help the airport to develop.

There are other locations for this development. There is one, for example, at an interchange at Harlow—if my right hon. Friend insists on it being at an interchange—and a new interchange is proposed north of Harlow. In

any event, the Department is ill-advised to site this at interchanges. It should adhere to the original policy of establishing areas such as this independent of other roads so that they serve the motorway and the motorway alone. If this service area is to go ahead, lorry parking should be taken out of the town of Bishop's Stortford and located in the area, but that is not in the Minister's current proposals.

I shall conclude, giving an opportunity to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden to contribute to the debate. I trust the Minister will take the points I have made seriously into account when replying to the debate.

11.52 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the hon. Member have the Minister's consent to intervene as well as that of his hon. Friend?

Mr. Haselhurst: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) for raising this matter. He and I have fought an almost lone battle to have further close consideration given to the issue since it was overtaken, as it were, by the decision to expand the airport.

The proposal for a service area on the M11 has been around for a long time and obviously needed resolution, but it so happened that the more complex question of the airport overtook it, and that was decided, yet a final decision on the motorway service area has not been taken. It seems incredible, in the light of the airport decision, that the Minister should still consider the Birchanger interchange to be the right place for this development. It would be tempting Providence to attract to that one interchange so much potential traffic.

The Minister has carefully answered representations that I have made about the statistical evidence that has been made available and forecasts that have been examined by officials of his Department and that suggest that perhaps my fears are exaggerated. While one never wishes to treat lightly scientific and objective evidence in matters such as this, one must point out that the statistical evidence and forecasting of the Department of Transport have not always been spectacularly accurate.

I recall a predecessor of the Minister arguing in defence of a view taken by the Department that the proposed A1-M1 link could in places satisfactorily be a single carriageway. I am glad that that view has been abandoned. One must balance statistics with a degree of common sense. It is hoping too much to believe that this one intersection could bear the weight of traffic that is likely to be on it, in the light not only of it being the direct access point in the foreseeable future to the airport, but of the Secretary of State taking the commendable decision to trunk the A120. That means, regardless of the airport, that his decision recognises that the A120 will become an ever more important east-west route. Thus, traffic will be bearing down on this interchange from all points of the compass. To add an entrance to and exit from a motorway service area is a proposal which should be tested more objectively than simply by the statisticians of the Department of Transport.

Secondly, I support the fears that have been expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford about the separation of the urban development at Bishop's Stortford and the airport. Those fears will be echoed by my constituents in the parish of Birchanger, which adjoins the area. They, too, fear that what is a green and pleasant band will be closed by urbanisation if the motorway service area is situated where it is presently intended to be. It is proposed to put a commercial honeypot too near to another one, and there is no doubt that the bees will swarm all round. It will be difficult for the planning authorities, in the wake of the airport and the motorway service area, to defend any sort of rural belt in the area. If they fail to do that, they will be flying in the face of the general undertakings that the Government have honourably given in their airports White Paper about the protection of the environment in the area that we are discussing.

That is why we urge my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider the matter. It is recognised that there is inconvenience to the travelling public if a motorway service area is not provided on the M11 in the near future. Traffic usage has increased and a service area facility is needed. However, it is to take too great a risk to plough ahead regardless now that other decisions have been taken. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford, whom I thank for allowing me to take part in this short debate, in pressing for a public inquiry so that we may have an objective examination of the issues. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accede to that.

11.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I had not realised that it was possible for a Minister to object to an hon. Member who had not initiated an Adjournment debate contributing to it. I shall remember that in future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) has chosen a good day to initiate this debate. It is today that the Department of Transport has released a booklet on transport and the environment, a document which covers roads, rail, the ports and air movements. The page on which air traffic is addressed reveals that the number of passengers has grown and that the number of those affected by the noise and number index, which is the Department's way of giving a proxy indication of the effect of air traffic movements, has declined. It appears that the degree of disturbance is reducing. This is also the day when I went to Prestwick on a BA146, which is known as the "Quiet Trader". It is almost a whisper jet. On the runway it creates less noise than that which is required in the implementation of a new road scheme to enable a nearby houseowner to obtain provision for double glazing. Over the years we shall see noisy jets replaced by substantially quieter aircraft, which will be welcomed in the constituency of Hertford and Stortford and in many others that are near to airports.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) has contributed to the debate and I hope to reply to as many of the detailed points that he raised as possible within the time that remains available to me. I hope that those who are present in the Chamber will forgive me if I observe that there is not one member of the alliance parties in his or her place this evening. With the exception of yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no representative of the official Opposition in the Chamber. It seems that we have environment and transport to ourselves this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not represent any party in the House. I am neutral and impartial.

Mr. Bottomley: Having read reviews of the book entitled "Faith in Politics", Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that we would all make that claim. I have made the claim that I wanted to make Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I bow to your ruling on and correction of any imputation that I may have made about you.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford raised a number of issues and I think that it will be best for me to pass some of them to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I do not think that I am competent to talk about housing development around my hon. Friend's constituency, though I recognise that there are pressures for house building in areas such as the one that he represents. I do not know whether that will boost his majority in any general election that may come, and as the issue is one that is slightly outside my remit I shall choose to adhere to the transport elements of the issue that my hon. Friend has raised.

In some respects my hon. Friend has asked me to prejudge the issues that he hopes will be raised at a public inquiry. Both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden have asked whether I can give a commitment to a public inquiry, and I do so. There will be a public inquiry into the motorway service area proposal. I know that that will come as relief to some and welcome news to others. An announcement that I intended to withdraw the proposal altogether might be even more welcome, but I do not intend to make it. I wish to say that bluntly to my hon. Friends. If we have an independent, impartial inspector hearing our case and the cases of my hon. Friends and others who are objecting to the proposal, there will be confidence that, if the proposal goes ahead, it will be only after an independent, impartial inspector has heard the evidence and listened to the arguments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford suggested one or two other places where there might be—in his view—more suitable locations for the motorway service area. I do not want to go into detail about other areas. We believe that we have picked the appropriate place and quadrant of the interchange. It would also be inappropriate if I went on at length to claim that there are some protections on continuous development. I understand that there is a golf course between the proposed MSA site and Bishop's Stortford.

Mr. Bowen Wells: No.

Mr. Bottomley: If there is no golf course, my eyes have been misleading me. I have seen a photograph of what looked suspiciously like bunkers on the other side of the MSA area.

Mr. Bowen Wells: That is partly correct.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford has said that my argument and my facts are partly correct.

My hon. Friend also raised the matter of lorry parking. No one wants unsuitable heavy vehicles stopping overnight in Bishop's Stortford or any other town or village nearby when it is possible for vehicles to be placed in lorry bays in an MSA. If the MSA is eventually situated at Birchanger, there should be an appropriate number of such bays. We have suggested to the operators that instead of the normal 50 bays there should be 85. That would allow greater control over lorries that might otherwise be placed in Bishop's Stortford. I hope that that will be some comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford and my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden referred to the Department of Transport's forecasting. I have spent some time in industry and commerce. In every area in which I have worked, we have made forecasts. The Department of Transport makes its forecasts public. If we consider how our forecasts have stood up to events, we find that they have not done too badly. We were surprised in some places, and we have over-estimated the amount of traffic in some areas and under-estimated it in others. However, in general we do pretty well. We can hold our heads up among any set of forecasters.

I have news for some of the pollsters who have been considering political affairs over the past few years. I suspect that some of their forecasts or polls have changed faster than the underlying views, although I suspect that they are becoming more accurate the nearer they get to the last year of this Parliament.

I am grateful for the welcome that my hon. Friends have given to the Government's White Paper on roads, produced last week, which refers to trunking at least part of the A120. Trunking a road makes no significant difference to the amount of traffic. However, it makes a difference to the source of funding for improvements. One reason why there has been such a good welcome for the proposal from Essex and Hertfordshire is that the money will come directly from the taxpayer rather than from part-funding from the taxpayer and the ratepayer, as might otherwise have happened. It may also mean that other schemes that the councils have set their hearts upon may not have to be delayed by giving greater priority to the needs of the A120. I make that point because some of my constituents may read the reports of this debate. They saw the GLC spend a lot of money before its welcome abolition, claiming that as soon as the Department of Transport trunked a road, it automatically became a dual carriageway overnight. The truth is that 60 per cent. of our trunk roads are single carriageways and an awful lot of them will remain single carriageways. I am not offering that prospect for the A120, but I want people to know that trunking does not automatically lead to a massive increase in traffic or to major spending in the short term.

We must use that quality to which my hon. Friends referred—common sense. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said in a television broadcast that was repeated on each channel this evening, common sense is basically Conservative policy. If we can mix that with giving people a democratic right to object to or oppose the Department's proposals, we are likely to make progress. Even if all people are not satisfied, they will know that they have at least had their day in court or that there has been a public inquiry at which they have been able to put their views.

It may be worth reminding the House that it is our policy to provide MSAs at approximately 30-mile intervals at the moment so that the needs, comfort and safety of travellers can be catered for. Our present programme is to provide 20 new MSAs to fill gaps in the existing network, and on new motorways. The new sites will provide the standard range of facilities such as parking, toilets, refreshments, fuel and telephones 24 hours a day. We also look for the capacity to meet traffic demand well into the 21st century.

To those who believe that people should not travel around by car, it is worth saying that there are 3 million provisional licence holders in this country, of whom 2 million are female. Therefore, instead of the car being the toy of the rich white male, there are a growing number of women driving, as well as a growing number of pensioners, and members of the ethnic minorities. As the Secretary of State said in a recent speech, it is just as important to cater for the needs of the person running a mark 1 Cortina in, say, Brixton as it is for the person running a new Montego in Watford.

The MSA sites are necessary because, where such services are not available on the motorway, travellers will seek them in nearby communities, causing congestion and thus losing many of the benefits of the motorway. The MSA sites are selected by consultants' study or other means, and account is taken of planning, environmental and traffic grounds, as well as costs and suitability.

As my hon. Friend said, Birchanger was selected in 1980 after consultation with East Hertfordshire and Uttlesford district councils, and with Hertfordshire and Essex county councils. Alternatives were considered in other quadrants of the M11-A120 junction. We consider that the present site in the south-west quadrant is the best. It is near the mid-point of the M11, offers services to east-west traffic on the A120, and will provide back-up for the MSAs that are coming on the M25.

Outline planning clearance was given in 1980 and renewed by all four interested local authorities in 1985. In 1985 they also had the opportunity to reconsider the proposal in relation to the decision on Stansted airport. Draft compulsory purchase orders for land acquisition for the MSA and the road diversion scheme were issued in January 1987. Twenty six objections were lodged, including one from my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford and another from East Hertfordshire district council, which agreed planning clearance in 1985 but has now revised its views.

As I have said, an inquiry is considered appropriate and will be held later this year. Objectors will have ample opportunity to make their case, and to test that of the Department, before an independent inspector.

All new MSA sites are carefully landscaped and screened by trees and other planting with bund walls—earth mounds—where appropriate to minimise environmental intrusion. At Birchanger, landscaping would be undertaken in and on the edge of the site to minimise visual and noise intrusion and light at night. From a visit that I paid, I seem to remember that the site lies in part at least, between the M11 and the golf course, on land that slopes down to the motorway, and that, in itself, will help screening. Investigations—by which I mean the use of my own eyes as well as of the advice that I am given—show no housing in the immediate area, and the golf course provides a buffer to the nearest housing concentration. Of course, the immediate area may be slightly more extensive to my hon. Friend than it is to myself.

We take environmental issues seriously, which is one of the reasons why we produced our booklet on "Transport and the Environment", which will be welcomed by many of my hon Friends' constituents. If they have not been able to get a copy, they should let me know and I shall happily send them one. It is something of which the Department can be proud. We do not claim that we have got everything right, but certainly during the past seven or eight years we have made dramatic improvements. There is not nearly as much controversy over roads and associated schemes as there was during the 1970s.

We have learned, but I think that some of the objectors have learned also. People may often find that there are things for which they can argue if they have had the experience of reading "Transport and the Environment" and perhaps they can also give them more publicity. I am not suggesting that badger tunnels and toad holes are the answer to motorway service areas, but they show the breadth of our environmental concerns. It is worth noting that we are the largest planter of trees for amenity purposes in the country—second only to the Forestry Commission.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends for raising the subject of the motorway service area. Obviously, the development of Stansted will bring some changes to the local area. There will be safe areas for foreseeable traffic demand both from the M11 and the A120, and we propose two accesses to the motorway service area.

My hon. Friends rightly reflect some of the worries of their constituents. By the time the inquiry is completed, people will understand how well they are represented in the House and how far the Conservative party appears to have a monopoly of concern in this area.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 May 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

1. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the present level of homelessness and the cost of the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 16 January and to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 18 February.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister recognise that, during the eight years since the Conservative Government were elected, homelessness has doubled and that the number of people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation has probably quadrupled? Does he recognise also that it is the most shattering indictment of his Government's policy that more funds are being spent—squandered—on bed-and-breakfast accommodation when, in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), he confirmed that it would be cheaper to build houses for the homeless than to put them in bed-and-breakfast accommodation?

Mr. Patten: I know how much the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the issue. I know of his long standing interest in it. However, he is blinkered in his attitude to the possible full range of solutions to the problems of homelessness. I can only draw his attention to the considerable number of empty homes in council ownership in London. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not done what he could to persuade councils such as Brent and Lambeth to make use of the money that I offered them last year to fill empty houses to house the homeless. They turned it down.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend tell the House when the inquiry that his Department has conducted into the working of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 will be reporting? Does he realise that many unemployed people move to areas such as the seaside and other areas of great beauty in the countryside and create major problems in towns such as those in east Devon? Will he make certain that the report is published?

Mr. Patten: I entirely appreciate the concern felt in areas such as east Devon over this issue. Of course, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are giving them close attention.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister confirm that one of the ways in which he and his fellow Ministers are planning to try to deal with homelessness after the next election is another Conservative attempt to revitalise the private rented sector and that, at the moment, they are planning to give subsidies to private landlords so that they can make a profit out of housing?

Mr. Patten: It is surely a matter of common interest and concern in the House that there are 540,000 empty homes in the private rented sector. Surely we can find ways of making it possible for some of those homes to be filled to house people in need.

Mr. Squire: Will my hon. Friend confirm that much of the additional funding for the Housing Corporation this year is specifically targeted at replacing bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Pending the reduction and elimination of that unsatisfactory form of housing, will my hon. Friend look closely at the possibility of, at the least, registering the landlords of some of that unpleasant property?

Mr. Patten: I know and respect my hon. Friend's long concern, as a board member of Shelter, in this matter. Almost all the extra money going to the Housing Corporation this year is to provide additional accommodation for the homeless and for young job movers, in close co-operation with the private sector. With £30 million of public sector money we shall draw in about £60 million of private sector money, provide a substantial number of new homes, and get people out of bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister is quite right in saying that there is not one simple solution to the problem. There are a variety of solutions. Why has he not done more to encourage councils such as Bromley and Brent, which have tried, with modest resources, to experiment with making resources available to tenants who do not want to buy the house or flat in which they are living to enable them to have a stake somewhere else in the market, thereby releasing much needed family housing? Why has he not helped Brent council in that direction?

Mr. Patten: Transferable discounts are an interesting idea. That is why my Department is monitoring, for a short period in Bromley, Brent and in Ealing, the effects of the transferable discounts policy to see whether it works. We have three useful experiments going on. We shall look at the matter before the end of the year.

Green Belt (Planning Policy)

2. **Mr. Conway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to revise his guidance on planning policy in the green belt; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): No, Sir. The Government's policy is that there should be no inappropriate development in the green belt.

Mr. Conway: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply.

If the acreage of green belt has doubled during the period of this Government, is that not evidence in itself that the balance between the needs of primary agriculture and those who have a genuine interest in matters environmental — not just a party-political, partisan approach—is well safeguarded by the proven record of the present Administration?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, that is the case. In fact, the area of approved green belt in England has more than doubled since 1979 to 4·5 million acres. I confirm again that approval should not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development in the green belt for purposes other than those connected with agriculture, sport, cemeteries or institutions standing in extensive grounds, or for other uses appropriate to a rural area. That has always been the position, and I reaffirm it now.

Mr. Hayes: I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that in Harlow two controversial planning applications have been made, one of which is concerned with the green belt. They relate to Brenthill park and the Guilden way. My right hon. Friend is shortly to make a decision about Brenthill park, but I understand that a public inquiry is to be held on 16 June on the Guilden way application. As the two applications are intertwined, will my right hon. Friend seriously consider——

Mr. Skinner: Go on, Harpo.

Mr. Hayes: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. For once in my life I have been put off by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Will my right hon. Friend seriously consider—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Give him a chance.

Mr. Hayes: As the two public inquiries are intertwined, will my right hon. Friend seriously consider on 16 June delaying the decision on Guilden way until after a decision has been made on Brenthill park?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot entirely accept my hon. Friend's assertion about the intertwining of the two applications. I feel that each must be considered on its merits, and I also feel that we owe to those who appeal for permission a duty to deal with their applications speedily. I therefore believe that it would be right to proceed with the first application as speedily as possible, and to take the second in the normal sequence.

Nitrogen Fertilizers

3. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from water authorities concerned about the excessive use of nitrogen fertilizers.

7. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with public water authorities on the pollution of public water supplies by nitrates; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): My right hon. Friend has received no representations from water authorities specifically on the excessive use of nitrogen fertilizers. However, discussions on effective methods of limiting nitrate levels in water supplies are proceeding with those water authorities most affected.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister will be aware, however, that the water authorities, including the Severn-Trent water authority, are very concerned about the level of nitrogen use, and that there is a feeling that there is an impasse between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Obviously, it is in the interests of everyone that the issue and the dispute are resolved. Can the Minister give us a definite time scale under which positive steps will be taken?

Mr. Waldegrave: Not quite yet. The hon. Gentleman is right: the Severn-Trent water authority is one of the authorities with which we have been in the closest touch about the matter, and it has sketched out for the Department some outlines of what water conservation zones might look like. That work has been very helpful, and I pay tribute to it. However, we have not yet reached the point at which we can set a time scale.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend recognise that there is deep concern about the excessive use of nitrates in agriculture, and that not only the Opposition parties are concerned about our environment. I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is very concerned. Will he therefore speak to our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and ask him to try to offer some form of financial inducement, perhaps, to farmers to reduce the amount of——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not want the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) to be put off as well.

Mr. Ashby: —to reduce the amount of nitrogen that is used by farmers.

Mr. Waldegrave: These are complicated issues, and there are two or three different ways of approaching them. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been giving very helpful advice to farmers about how to minimise damage. On some occasions, water treatment can also be used. My hon. Friend referred to the polluter pays principle. Financial compensation could cause difficulties. However, it might be right for experimental zones to have some such regime.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), whom I should have called first.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mood at the moment is not conducive to being nasty to farmers, but is my hon. Friend aware of the rising tide of dissatisfaction in areas such as Southend where water consumers are having to pay substantially for the removal of pollution from their public water supplies, particularly when they know that the only effect of the use of nitrates is to produce vast mountains of cereals that cannot be given away? Once the current excitement is over, will my hon. Friend bear in mind his legal obligations under the Single European Act to make the polluter pay for his pollution?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend refers quite rightly to a serious problem, but solutions are not easy to find. That is why it is taking a little time to come forward with them. The detailed control that some people suggest there should be over applications of nitrogen would be exceedingly

difficult to run in other than experimental areas. None the less, we shall have to consider whether we can find some solutions.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the Minister aware that for nitrogen fertilisers we could substitute part of what is becoming another problem—the manure mountain that is developing in Europe, along with the butter and the beef mountains? Conservative Members may laugh, but there is already a manure mountain in Holland, and one is developing in this country as a result of EEC subsidies for intensive farming. The manure mountain is causing pollution on the land and in the groundwater. If it were used instead of nitrogen fertilisers, we might be able to solve the problem.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman's chemistry is about as good as that of the famous American senator who, in relation to the acid rain problem, said that the time had come to take nitrogen out of the atmosphere. Nitrogen is still nitrogen, whether it emanates from an animal or from ICI, Billingham. A quite separate problem, that of slurry waste, is affecting water in much the same way as are fertilisers. The question is whether we can treat waste in such a way as to avoid that problem. I do not, therefore, think that the hon. Gentleman has yet solved the problem.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is well aware of my long-standing problem with the River Avon, and he will have heard of the considerable disquiet that greeted the apparent decision of his Department to cope with the proposed River Avon survey. Can he say to what extent, and when, that might be funded by his Department? Will he also take on board the considerable concern that is felt by those at the Freshwater Biological Association, which is facing a 30 per cent. cut in its manpower? They are the people who can do most to solve the problem of the nitrate poisoning of our water supplies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latter point is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. He is responsible for the science budget. I was not aware that my hon. Friend had any problems on any matters whatsoever, but it is alleged that there are problems with the Avon in his area. The first proposal that was put to my Department for a survey was thought by the scientists in my Department to be not very well based, but discussions continue and if something sensible and helpful can be designed, we shall certainly consider whether to support it.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Minister aware that as a consequence of nitrate levels in some areas being double the recommended EEC values, in April of this year the European Community started legal action against the United Kingdom Government? In addition, the river quality survey shows that the recent trends of improvement have been reversed. What steps are the Government taking to restore these trends? How much cash are they making available to water authorities to bring water quality within the EEC guideline of 50mg/litre? Further to his answers to other hon. Members, will he emphasise in his discussions with his colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that he is sticking to the polluter must pay principle?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a certain amount of confusion here, too, I am afraid. The European Commission has not instituted legal proceedings. The hon. Gentleman may be thinking of the quite separate problem of nitrites, which has nothing to do with this issue. His question is a bit off the beam.

I forget what the hon. Gentleman's second point was, I beg his pardon.

Land Use

4. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when, following consultation, he intends to publish a circular on planning and agricultural land.

Mr. Waldegrave *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: We are giving very careful consideration to the comments that we have received on the draft circular "Development Involving Agricultural Land" and hope to publish it soon.

Mr. Bellingham: I knew that it was a tricky question, but I have a feeling that it was actually a plant.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that in West Norfolk which is, after all, one of the most beautiful parts of the country, there has been some concern about the recent announcement in respect of development on agricultural land. Will my right hon. Friend make it crystal clear that the announcement will not lead to any additional development and, indeed, that it will probably lead to better planning decisions? Will he also make it clear that it will not lead to an increase in the number of planning applications granted on appeal in respect of land outside village development guidelines?

Mr. Ridley: I apologise to my hon. Friend. I received a message that he would not be here. I am delighted that he is, because it gives me a chance to answer his important question.

I hope to publish the revised circular soon, but we are taking account of all the comments made to us. No change will alter the basic fact that planning permission will be required for all developments on open land, although we intend to substitute the need to have environment and countryside objectives in mind as well as the agricultural quality of the land. That does not mean that 85 per cent. of the land will be opened up to controlled development of any sort, either in west Norfolk or in any other beautiful part of the country. It could mean that there will be better planning decisions about the use of the small amount of land that has to be taken. I hope that that will be the result.

Mr. Livsey: What account is the Minister taking of the recommendation of Friends of the Earth that priority be given for public house building and for the planting of deciduous trees? Does he agree that the planning arrangements for agricultural land and its protection have served our environment well?

Mr. Ridley: With that last point, I entirely agree. As I have said, I hope that the new circular will result in even better planning for the use of land. On the first point, I imagine that the hon. Gentleman meant public housing rather than public houses. There is a conflict in many district councils between the refusal to give planning permission for more housing and their desire to build more houses themselves. That is a conflict for the local authorities to resolve.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the pressure for building on the green belt and on agricultural

land is partly due to the fact that we have not yet done enough to recycle urban and fringe land? Will he confirm that perhaps 47 per cent. of all new house building last year was on recycled land, but that much more can still be done to build on land in the inner cities, on land held by local authorities and other statutory undertakers? Will my right hon. Friend undertake to make every effort to ensure that the private sector is aware of urban development grants, derelict land grants and all the other initiatives introduced by his Department?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with all that my hon. Friend has said, with one tiny exception. Last year, 47 per cent. of all development was on recycled land and 45 per cent. of all housing development was on such land. That is the best figure that we have ever achieved, and I hope that we shall be able to do even better in the future. It is remarkable that we have managed to use old land for 47 per cent. of all development.

Mr. Skinner: Build on the old land on the Terrace.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) refrain from holding private conversations?

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Dr. Clark.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that his draft circular included no provision whatever for the protection of the countryside for environmental purposes outside the green belt, the areas of outstanding natural beauty and the national parks? In view of the representations that he has received, will he give an assurance that protection for environmental and conservation purposes will be extended to the whole of the countryside?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman's premise is wrong. The original draft of the circular gave the very protection that he seeks, but my colleagues and I are considering whether the English language can be made clearer so that even the hon. Gentleman can understand it.

Radioactive Waste (Hinkley Point)

5 **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment where the low-level and the intermediate-level radioactive waste from Hinkley Point power station is held at present; what plans have been made for holding it in the event of a new pressurised water reactor electricity generating plant at Hinkley Point; what is the size of the area involved; and how long the waste will have to remain on site.

Mr. Waldegrave: Low-level radioactive waste is temporarily stored at Hinkley Point nuclear power station pending disposal at Drigg. Intermediate-level waste is also stored at Hinkley Point pending the development of a suitable disposal route.

No proposals have been received by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for energy for a new station at Hinkley Point. I cannot therefore comment on what they might be.

Mr. Speller: I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks, but is he aware that the Central Electricity Generating Board intends to put a new PWR at Hinkley Point? As nuclear waste is already being stored there, and as even more may be stored there in the future, does he accept that planning is much more than a purely local function? Will he give an assurance that if the new station is built there will be consultation in the whole south-west area and not just in the local Somerset part about disposal and containment and, indeed, about the whole plant?

Mr. Waldegrave: Any proposal—I do not know of any proposals at present—will be considered in the normal, thoroughly rigorous manner.

Dr. Cunningham: May I warn the Government that the consequence of the expedient in relation to nuclear waste disposal policy announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment in the House last Friday is that all Britain's low-level nuclear waste will be concentrated at Drigg in Copeland and there is no other policy in sight for the foreseeable future? Is the Minister aware that that policy is increasingly unacceptable even in a community that supports the development of civil nuclear power, especially when the Government fail entirely to make the necessary investment in the infrastructure—in roads and other communications to the area—which should be an essential prerequisite for the development of any such policy? Is he aware that the people of Cumbria and of Copeland in particular are slowly but surely losing all faith in the Government and their policies?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can put the hon. Gentleman's mind firmly at rest on one matter. There will be a low-level waste disposal route, which will be combined with the intermediate waste disposal route, as many hon. Members on both sides of the House have argued. Drigg will therefore not be the only facility. That would be quite unacceptable. It may even be necessary to create some low-level waste storage facilities at the power stations if there is any slippage in the programme. Drigg cannot be the only national facility—the hon. Gentleman is quite right about that. In fairness, I should point out that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessors have gone out of their way in a number of respects to try to discuss matters with the council at Copeland and elsewhere and there has been a good level of agreement on some of the projects undertaken.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister mentioned long-term disposal routes. Is he aware that since his right hon. Friend's announcement last week there has been considerable alarm in the Highlands and Islands about the possibility of nuclear waste being dumped on the islands?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Hinkley Point. It is not much wider than that.

Mr. Wallace: Waste from Hinkley Point could go to any of those places, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister therefore confirm his written answer to me last week that no research has been specifically directed to small islands and reassure the people of northern Scotland that there is no intention to dispose of nuclear waste there?

Mr. Waldegrave: Hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and other hon. Members are going around the country trying to stir up the maximum alarm, when they should be thinking about their responsibilities. There is no proposal on the table at the moment, so the hon. Gentleman should not try to get into his local newspapers by believing that there is.

Council House Sales

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in England since May 1979.

Mr. Ridley: From April 1979 to December 1986 about 769,000 tenants bought their homes from English local authorities and new towns.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend intend to take any further steps to draw the attention of the public to the Housing and Planning Act 1986? Does he expect the provisions of that Act to have a big effect on future sales?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, we have tried to get a circular to every council tenant who is living in a flat. I do not think that we have had a 100 per cent. success rate, but we have done our best to distribute a leaflet to them and the matter has been publicised in many respects. However, I agree with my hon. Friend that much more could be done. We shall seek other ways of making it clear that under a Conservative Government everybody will have a right to buy their house or flat at a discount. I refrain from adding to the leaflet that under either of the two Opposition parties that opportunity will depend on whether the local authority is prepared to give them the right. That is disgraceful backtracking from one of our most successful policies.

Mrs. Renée Short: Is the Secretary of State aware of the seriousness of selling off so many local authority houses when his Government are building only about 130,000 a year, which is about half the number that the Labour Government built before 1979? Does he not understand that the more houses that are sold off to sitting tenants, the longer those who want to rent their local authorities will have to wait?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady is putting her desire to be a municipal landlord before the wishes of the people.

Mr. Fallon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that later this month in Darlington the 1,000th council house will be sold to the existing tenant? In view of the fact that many other families in Darlington wish to purchase, will he establish from the Opposition, as a matter of urgency, in which local authority areas the right to buy will be suspended and in which it will not?

Mr. Ridley: I am delighted to hear about the sale of the 1,000th council house in Darlington and I am waiting for the Labour party to declare from which authorities this right will be removed. However, it is a pretty academic question, because I do not think that it will be in a position to remove that right.

Mr. John Fraser: The Secretary of State's description of Labour's policy is a perversion. Our policies on these matters were stated fully in Committee on the Landlord and Tenant Bill. Does the Secretary of State recall that in 1983 the Government estimated that the discounted price at which homes were sold was £9,000, so, on the figures that he has given, does he agree that about £7,500 billion in capital receipts has been generated from sales, which is enough to build about one third of a million homes to rent over the last eight years? Why, with all those extra resources, have the Government built 500,000 fewer homes to rent instead of a third of a million more? Does he not agree that the story of the last eight years with regard to housing is one of squandering the resources for providing homes to rent for the people?

Mr. Ridley: If I have misdescribed the hon. Gentleman's policy on giving local authority tenants the right to buy from their local authority, I would be glad if he will make that clear. I thought that there was a Lib — Lab pact on this matter and that they were in agreement. I have heard Opposition Members say many times that they will give local authorities in stress areas the right to refuse this opportunity.

The hon. Gentleman always talks about council houses, but he knows that private sector house building is at an all-time record. We are encouraging the Housing Corporation, with funds as well as legislative improvements, to go into the independent rented sector and build a great many more houses.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Would my right hon. Friend care to tell the House whether, on the heels of the great success of the municpal right to buy, he can hold out hopes to private tenants of private landlords that they might expect legislation to enable them to become home owners as well?

Mr. Ridley: I would certainly like to tell my hon. Friend that we are very keen to increase the number of houses to rent and in due course we shall bring forward proposals to do just that in the private sector.

Community Charge

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received as to the minimum level of community charge to be paid by those on low incomes.

The Minister for Local Government (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): My right hon. Friend has received, and continues to receive, a substantial number of representations on this issue.

Mr. Sheerman: What will the Minister do to reassure my constitutents in Huddersfield who, if there are three people in a household, are faced with a 138 per cent. increase in their rate bill and a 218 per cent. rate increase if there are four adults in the household? What will the Minister say to those who are not only on low, but middle-range, incomes, who are faced with such a ruinous increase in their rate bill that they will end up either in the poor house or the work house under this Government?

Dr. Boyson: I remind the hon. Gentleman that there are no work houses under this Government. However, there is a considerable amount of income support and help for the low paid in our society. If we concentrate on that, we have already said that the mentally handicapped and those in old peoples homes will be exempt, the severely physically disabled will receive 100 per cent. rebates and that there will be generous rebates for those on low incomes. Indeed, 80 per cent. of old-age pensioners will be better off than they are now as single pensioners. [HON. MEMBERS: "No".] Opposition Members may not like to know that they will be better off under a Conservative Government, but the public know it. It is also important to recognise that it would be unfair to impose financial burdens on those on low incomes. It is equally

unreasonable for people to vote in the length and breadth of this country without realising the financial penalties of the policies for which they are voting.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that when the community charge is introduced there will be a very much greater incentive for Labour-controlled councils, such as Norwich city council, to keep rate increases down to a low level, and that that would benefit my constituents, business and industry in Norwich?

Dr. Boyson: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. Undoubtedly, the opposition to the community charge from the Labour Benches stems from the fact that they know that it will bring reality home to authority after authority. If spending in Huddersfield and many other authorities was reduced to the grant-related expenditure level, authorities could reduce considerably the burden on ratepayers.

Mr. Blair: Now that even the Prime Minister yesterday admitted that this was a poll tax, and when the Secretary of State takes home about £30 a week extra as a result of the change, what have the Government to say to the millions of families already below the bread line who will be tipped further into misery by this change?

Dr. Boyson: Reference has been made to the question of a poll tax. [HON. MEMBERS: "Poll tax."] Exactly. I have the reference here and I am glad that Opposition Members also read *Hansard*. If hon. Members would read *Hansard* and go to the dictionary, they will understand the definition of a poll tax — *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member would listen, I will advance his education even further. A poll tax means a tax per head. However, it has nothing to do with the voting register. If hon. Members go back to the dictionary—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question relates to a community tax.

Dr. Boyson: A poll tax is a tax per head. In this case, we are making exemptions, to which I have already referred. According to "Chambers" and other dictionaries, no reference is made—and no reference was made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister yesterday—to the question of linking the definition of a poll tax to the voting register.

Mr. Favell: Is it not true that the only places where the electors have anything to fear is where there are high-spending councils, and that if people are daft enough to elect a bunch of twerps, such as those who represent Manchester, they have only themselves to blame?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that "twerp" is an inelegant parliamentary expression.

Dr. Boyson: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Indeed, the community tax—or rather the community charge— brings home to voters the cost of what they are voting for. In Manchester, the business ratepayers alone would save £30 million or £40 million. Manchester might then be again the prosperous city that it once was under private enterprise.

Mr. Favell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If it is about that word, the hon. Gentleman may say something about it.

Mr. Favell: Mr. Speaker, "twerp" is a good old-fashioned northern word, which was used in a sensible parliamentary way. What is unacceptable about it?

Mr. Speaker: It means something rather different in London.

Dr. Cunningham: Why does the Minister continue with useless subterfuge when even the Prime Minister confessed yesterday that what the Government intend to introduce is a poll tax? Why does he seek to mislead people when he knows that his own Green Paper makes it clear that many people who pay no rates now will pay under the new system? For example, of the 7·5 million low-income families receiving housing benefit, 3 million pay no rates now, but will have to pay the new tax. Many of those people, including national insurance pensioners, widows and unemployed people, will have to pay the same level of tax as stockbrokers, moneybrokers and millionaires. Pensioners and unemployed people will be taxed at the same level as the latter group, and everybody will pay a minimum of 20 per cent. Is that what this Government regard as fair and just?—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Say that louder. If that is the Conservative view, we intend to make sure that the people of Britain know all about it.

Dr. Boyson: In setting income support levels, we shall take into account the impact of those levels on the most vulnerable groups, especially those who will pay for the first time. However, let us consider the other side of that. How many people earning £10,000, £15,000 or £20,000 a year, in houses the length and breadth of this country, pay nothing because they are not the householder? Is that justice? Similarly, is it justice that the Labour party talks about capital values, which would double the charge being paid by some people because capital values in London rose by 25 per cent. last year? That would be the threat to people living in Ealing, Brent, Waltham Forest and in other areas. What would people living in those areas do if faced by the capital values that are proffered by the Opposition?

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my hon. Friend point out that it is the present rating system—to which many people do not contribute—that is unfair and that the way in which old-age pensioners are clobbered by the present system is totally unfair? Will he assure us that a Conservative Government would reform the present rating system, unlike the Opposition, who continue to support high-rating councils throughout the country?

Dr. Boyson: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend and I think that most people in the country would agree with him, especially those living in high-spending Labour, alliance and double-alliance counties? The basis of what we are doing is at the least courageous, for a start. We are tackling the question of rates, about which people have grumbled in every party for 50 or 60 years. All that people are offered by the Opposition are capital values and a doubling of rates in many areas of the country, which people cannot afford to pay.

9. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the level of the community charge and uniform business rate in London.

10. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the likely level of the community charge in inner London boroughs.

Mr. Ridley: Since we published illustrative figures on 1 April we have received a small number of representations about the likely impact of our proposals on authorities in London.

Mr. Soley: As the Government have already caused many local authorities of all political complexions to make difficult choices between draconian cuts in basic services and increasing rates, how on earth does the Secretary of State justify a poll tax which, in areas such as Hammersmith and Fulham, will lead to the average family rate increasing from £365 in 1986-87 to no less than £432 per adult in the same year? What justification is there for such a regressive, heavy poll tax in local areas?

Mr. Ridley: I shall give the hon. Gentleman a good justification. Hammersmith and Fulham is overspending by £16 and the Inner London education authority is overspending by £246 per adult per year respectively on their GRE. That massive overspending must be paid for by the people and I suggest that it is not unreasonable that it should be paid for by the people who vote those idiots into office.

Several Hon. Members: Idiots?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is in the same category as twerp.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Secretary of State's discourtesy towards elected councillors is well known in this House and outside. Does he know that at present the average rate in the London borough of Newham is £517 a year and that if the poll tax is introduced it will mean that a two-adult household must pay £648 a year, a three-adult household £1,026 a year and a four-adult household £1,368 a year? That news will not do much damage to the Conservatives in Newham, because they do not stand a chance there, but how can the Secretary of State defend a system which imposes such charges on the second most deprived local authority area in the country while benefiting Mr. and Mrs. Thatcher in Dulwich to the tune of £37 a week in savings? This is an up the pole tax.

Mr. Ridley: Newham receives a high GRE of £906 per adult and it is spending £167 per adult on top of that. The community charge will be high in Newham because expenditure is high. Furthermore, the Labour party in its publication "Local Government Reform in England and Wales" states that it wants a system of capital rateable values with variations in income, not variations in rateable value — *[Interruption.]* I am entitled to tell the House what the effects of the Opposition's policy are. The effect of variations in income on the assessment of rates is that rates will increase massively in the north of England and will decrease in the south-east. That is their proposal and it is about time the country knew it.

Sir George Young: If Labour Members are genuinely concerned about the problems of Londoners on average or below average incomes, should they not spend more time talking about local government expenditure, which is at the heart of the problem? Can my right hon. Friend tell the House that he will keep rate-capping provisions in operation after the community charge has been introduced to give protection to people in Ealing?

Mr. Ridley: As the Green Paper showed, we intend to retain some form of limitation on the charges that authorities may impose. My hon. Friend is entirely right that the reason for the high levels of community charge in London is massive spending. The overspending of ILEA above GRE is £246 per adult. Somebody must pay for that and the House will not disagree with the suggestion that the people in inner London should.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend further consider Ealing and appreciate that the pressure for the community charge arises because of the sheer abuse of the rate system by the Ealing Labour council, which has imposed a 65 per cent. increase in rates on domestic ratepayers and a 57·3 per cent. rate increase on industry? That means a rate increase of at least £5 per household. Pensioners come to my surgery crying because they cannot pay it, but the Labour party does not care. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the vicious Ealing Labour council will be rate-capped as soon as possible to save my constituents from the bread line?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot say anything about the future of rate limitation or how it might affect Ealing, but I entirely share my hon. Friend's view that the ruthless and cynical imposition of massive spending and massive rate increases on innocent citizens is one of the most disgraceful and distasteful features of the Labour party.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Secretary of State confirm that in Tory-controlled Wandsworth, the Prime Minister's favoured local authority, the community charge will result, per head, in a 115 per cent. increase compared to the present system, and that that is the biggest increase of any local authority in England or Wales? How does he justify that?

Mr. Ridley: I justify it very simply. It is because there is a £246 per adult overspend by the Inner London education authority, of which Wandsworth is part. The Wandsworth rate, and the community charge that follows from it, is extremely low because of the good management of that council, but it is ruined by the surcharge for ILEA.

Mr. Squire: Given the passage last night in another place of the remaining stages of the Scottish equivalent legislation, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the possible advantages of deferring legislation in England and Wales until any minor difficulties are ironed out in Scotland?

Mr. Ridley: We are likely to defer the English and Welsh Bills until the start of the next Session of Parliament, as my hon. Friend knows. That will allow plenty of time to look at any difficulties. It is important to return to the point that the Labour party is proposing a system that would have the effect of putting up the charges that people pay in the north of England through the rating system, and bringing down what will be paid in the south-east. Some of my hon. Friends will be glad to hear that information.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State is in the mire on the poll tax and I hope he realises that. Is he aware that his excuse for the 115 per cent. increase in Wandsworth — because of ILEA spending — simply does not wash because, so capricious is the poll tax system that it will lead to a reduction in average rate bills in Conservative Westminster, which is also in the ILEA area? Do the adjectives "ruthless" and "cynical" also apply to the 57 per

cent. increase in the business rate that businesses in Wandsworth will have to pay, the 31 per cent. increase that businesses in Westminster will have to pay, the 32 per cent. increase that businesses in Ealing will have to pay, and the 82 per cent. increase that businesses in Kensington and Chelsea will have to pay? When the Secretary of State used the word "idiots", was he referring to those hundreds of thousands of electors who rejected the policies of the Conservative Government and Conservative councillors at the polls last May and elected Labour councillors? Was not the Tory Reform Group correct when it described the poll tax proposals as neither Conservative in concept nor sensible in application?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman might be glad to know that I have announced today proposals which will allow the minority of businesses that might face significant increases in rate bills five years to adjust to the new rate levies and that, where increases in the valuation are greatest, we shall postpone some of the increase in value to the next revaluation period.

Homelessness

11. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the rate of homelessness *(a)* in 1978 and *(b)* at the latest available date for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: English local authorities accepted responsibility for finding accommodation for 53,100 households in 1978 and for 103,000 in 1986. Over the same period the total housing stock has grown by 1·4 million while the number of households is estimated to have grown by only 1·25 million. Therefore, the overall supply of housing has improved.

Mr. Skinner: In the last few weeks the Government have discovered that public money thrown around reaches those parts of the electorate that monetarism cannot reach. Why do they not tell the local authorities to use the £7·5 billion from the receipts of council house sales to build some homes and provide some shelters for the homeless? The Government do not do that because they have a cynical disregard for the homeless, some of whom are not on the register and therefore, the Government do not have to worry about their votes.

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman had due regard for the needs of the homeless he would go to a local authority close to Bolsover, such as Manchester, and ask it why it is keeping 5,000 of its houses empty and why it has failed to collect £6 million in rents to help fill those homes.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that in London several hundred people are forced to sleep on the streets because they have nowhere to live? Is he aware that people placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation by local authorities are being evicted to make way for the tourist trade? Is he further aware that Tower Hamlets council is trying to evict 140 Bangladeshi families from bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Does he not think that the level of homelessness in the major cities is an absolute scandal and warrants immediate and urgent action by the Government to ensure that everyone in the country gets a roof over his head that he can afford?

Mr. Patten: I am not responsible for the activities of loony Liberal Tower Hamlets council. However, I am responsible for drawing to the attention of the hon. Gentleman the fact that there are about 30,000 empty council houses in London that could and should be used by Labour-controlled local authorities to house the homeless.

Tree Planting

12. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of all the tree planting funded directly or indirectly by his Department in 1985; what percentage of the trees have survived; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department funds the Countryside Commission, which paid £1·6 million in conservation grants, principally for tree planting, in 1985-86. A sample of trees planted previously with commission aid showed a median survival rate of 77 per cent. Planting by the Department directly during 1985 in the royal parks totalled some £50,000.

Mr. Lord: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. I am sure he appreciates that it is not the number of trees that are planted that is important, but the number that survive. Is he aware that in order to get the maximum number of trees to survive it is important that sufficient is spent on maintenance and not just on planting? I urge him to ensure that, however much tree planting is done, the right balance is maintained between maintenance and planting so that we can get the maximum survival rate, so as to beautify our countryside.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Countryside Commission survival rate figures are not bad. What my hon. Friend says will have to be taken into account in, for example, any new farm planting schemes.

Mr. Chapman: In commending the work of my hon. Friend's Department and other Departments, including particularly the Department of Transport, in tree planting schemes, may I ask whether he agrees that the real role of Government should be to offer expertise and encouragement to people to plant trees? To that end, does he think that the time is now propitious to have another national tree year?

Mr. Waldegrave: That may well be a good suggestion and perhaps it should be taken forward in the context of the work of the European Year of the Environment Committee. I pay tribute to the work being done all over Britain by farming and wildlife advisory groups on tree planting on farms.

Housing Expenditure (Leicester)

13. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money from central Government funding was provided for the city of Leicester to spend on housing in 1979 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. John Patten: Central Government contributions towards Leicester city council's housing expenditure are estimated to have been £45·2 million in 1986-87. A comparable figure is not available for 1979.

Mr. Janner: A comparable figure, is it, because it would show that the amount available has been reduced by at least 50 per cent., thereby making it impossible for the

excellent Leicester city council to carry out its duties in providing, maintaining and improving housing for people who need it in our cities?

On a specific point, what has happened to the £14 million that the Government promised would be available by the end of April under housing defects legislation for councils such as Leicester? Smith houses, Boot houses and houses with other defects are placing an immense burden on the council. Money will have to be spent on these houses instead of on the general provision. The money was promised, but where is it?

Mr. Patten: The announcement about the additional sums will be made in due course, to answer the hon. and learned Gentleman's second point. In answer to his first point, he supported the Labour Administration of 1974 to 1979, which made the biggest capital cuts in the nation's housing programme ever—about 46 per cent.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my hon. Friend exercise great caution in giving any additional sums of money to Leicester? Is he aware that Leicester city council—sadly, it is Labour-controlled now, but it will be Conservative-controlled after tomorrow — has 1,000 empty council houses and 26,000 council houses needing repair? The council is spending £5,972 on fighting the Housing and Planning Act 1986, which gives more rights to council tenants. It shows no interest in council tenants whatsoever. It is twinned with Nicaragua and does not give a damn for the decent people who live in Leicester.

Mr. Patten: I am delighted to respond to the authentic voice of the city of Leicester. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and with the editor of the *Leicester Mercury*, who, on Friday 1 May, condemned the activities of the Leicester city council in its smear campaigns over the rights of tenants in Leicester city—campaigns to which the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) gave his support.

State Security

3.30 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn) *(by private notice)* asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement in response to the statement made this morning by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) calling for a review by a senior judge of the findings of the 1977 inquiry into allegations about the operations of the security services in the mid-1970s, taking into account information reportedly contained in a book written by Mr. Peter Wright, examining both him and those officers who have been implicated by Mr. Wright or named by others, and providing the means to gain an independent verdict on the past, and to safeguard the future.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) has today called for an inquiry into recent allegations about the Security Service in relation to the Government led by the right hon. and noble Lord Wilson of Rievaulx between 1974 and 1976.

Allegations of this nature first gained currency 10 years ago, in July 1977. They were summarised in a speech in the House on 28 July 1977 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker). The allegations ranged widely, but were to the effect that the Security Service had sought to discredit the duly constituted Government of the day, and in particular its Prime Minister; or that some members of the Security Service had conspired together to do so.

On 23 August 1977, the right hon. Gentleman, the then Prime Minister, issued a statement in which he said that he had conducted detailed inquiries into the recent allegations about the Security Service and he was satisfied that they did not constitute grounds for lack of confidence in the competence or impartiality of the Security Service, or for instituting a special inquiry.

On 8 December 1977, the right hon. Gentleman told the House that Lord Wilson associated himself with that statement, and therefore there was no reason to carry the matter any further. I accepted the right hon. Gentleman's statement and conclusions without question. I believed them, and I still believe them, to be correct.

Early in 1978, a book was published, entitled "The Pencourt File", which contained fuller accounts of these allegations. My hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) has let me see copies of correspondence which he exchanged with the right hon. Gentleman the then Prime Minister. My hon. Friend drew the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the contents of the book, and in particular to a number of statements attributed in the book to the then Sir Harold Wilson. My hon. Friend urged the then Prime Minister to arrange for a full inquiry to be undertaken by the Security Commission.

In his reply dated 20 February 1978, the then Prime Minister said:

> "So far as I can see, there are no significant statements about matters of national security in this book of which the authorities were not aware when I issued a statement on allegations about the Security Service on 23 August last; I put the statement in the *Official Report* on 8 December."

He concluded:

> "I have nothing to add to it."

In recent weeks these allegations have been given renewed currency in press reports which the right hon. Gentleman, in his statement issued this morning, says go into greater detail than the 1977 inquiry knew about.

It would not be appropriate for me or other members of this Administration to see papers relating to that time, and we have not asked to do so. I can, however, tell the House that the director-general of the Security Service has reported to me that, over the last four months, he has conducted a thorough investigation into all these stories, taking account of the earlier allegations and of the other material given recent currency. There has been a comprehensive examination of all the papers relevant to that time. There have been interviews with officers in post in the relevant parts of the security service at that time, including officers whose names have been made public.

The director-general has advised me that he has found no evidence of any truth in the allegations. He has given me his personal assurance that the stories are false. In particular, he has advised me that all the security service officers who have been interviewed have categorically denied that they were involved in, or were aware of, any activities or plans to undermine or discredit Lord Wilson and his Government when he was Prime Minister. The then director-general has categorically denied the allegation that he confirmed the existence within the security service of a disaffected faction with extreme Right-wing views. He has further stated that he had no reason to believe that any such faction existed. No evidence or indication has been found of any plot or conspiracy against Lord Wilson by or within the security service.

Further, the director-general has also advised me that Lord Wilson has never been the subject of a security service investigation or of any form of electronic or other surveillance by the security service.

The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, in a statement he issued on 22 March this year, declared that he had every confidence in the integrity and ability of the present director-general of the Security Service. So have I. I accept the assurance and the advice which he has given me.

This latest investigation, taking account of recently published material, confirms the conclusions reached and announced by the right hon. Gentleman in 1977, which I then accepted without question. That was in accordance with the tradition of bipartisan Front Bench support for the security and intelligence services and the work that they do. Like the right hon. Gentleman in 1977 and again in 1978, I do not propose to institute any other inquiry into these matters. In the light of the director-general's assurance and advice, I do not believe that any further inquiry would be justified.

So, once again, as in 1977, detailed inquiries have confirmed the conclusion that there are no grounds for lack of confidence in the competence or impartiality of the Security Service or for instituting a special inquiry.

It is time to stop raking over the embers of a period over 10 years ago and to assert confidence, as I readily do, in the Security Service's strict adherence to the directive under which it carries out its duties, and in its skill and loyalty in carrying out the tasks which it is called upon to undertake in the defence of our security and freedom.

Mr. Kinnock: I share the confidence that the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend for Cardiff, South and

Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) have in the director-general of the Security Service and in his efforts in conducting an internal inquiry and examination into these matters, including the references to recently available information. That is all the more reason for thinking that there is nothing at all to fear from an independent review of that inquiry by a judge.

When my right hon. Friend, who was Prime Minister at the time of the 1977 inquiry, now seeks a review of that inquiry because there is, as he says, a direct conflict of evidence, it is unreasonable, unjust and unwise of the Prime Minister not to make a positive response to that very serious request. Does not the Prime Minister realise that such a refusal can only fuel suspicions of every description and that the resulting circumstances will not assist national security or the people engaged in maintaining national security?

Why does not the Prime Minister accept that allegations and assertions of criminal activity or criminal intentions that, as my right hon. Friend has said, go into greater detail than the 1977 inquiry knew about, have a significance which does not end with a change of Government or the passage of years? Why does not the Prime Minister recognise that those allegations and assertions—whether they relate to people still working or now retired, or to people living or dead—can do no good for either the reputation or the morale of the services and, therefore, must be dealt with in the manner suggested by my right hon. Friend in order to establish whether Peter Wright's version of events is fact, falsehood, fantasy, or a concoction of all three?

Mrs. Thatcher: If the right hon. Gentleman accepts the integrity and loyalty of the director-general of the service, he should accept his advice. There has never been such a detailed statement as I have made. I have tried always to make detailed statements, going further than any previous Prime Minister. When the previous Labour Prime Minister made a statement about the Security Service, he knew that he could rely upon the bipartisan support of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition. I wish we could do so today.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that her very full statement will be warmly welcomed by Government Members, as will the decision? If in spite of my request in my speech on 28 July 1977 and, as the former Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Leeds, South and Morley (Mr. Rees) has asserted, the inquiry then conducted was narrow and went into the allegations of bugging only and not into the wider allegations, all of which are referred to, does not that show that there must have been incompetence, negligence or a cover-up by that Government?

Mrs. Thatcher: My right hon. Friend has heard the very detailed statement I have made. I have confidence in the director-general of the Security Service and in the Security Service. I believe that the majority of people have more confidence in the Security Service of this country than in some of the politicians in the Opposition who try to undermine the service.

Sir James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am very grateful to the Prime Minister that the statement I issued this morning has given her the opportunity to tell us about the director-general's investigation. I ask her whether she would have told the House about that if I had not issued that statement. It is all very well for her to be convinced about these matters and for me to be convinced about them, but it is important also that the public should have confidence in the service.

What the right hon. Lady has said this afternoon will have gone some way to reassuring the public about what has happened. What I have said in my statement is quite clear: there is a direct conflict of evidence between what Mr. Peter Wright has said and what I was told by the director-general of the Security Service in 1977. I have my own view about whom I believe, and I have expressed that in my statement by saying that, strangely enough, Mr. Wright has offered no explanation for his failure to come forward in 1977 to tell the inquiry what he then knew, despite a public invitation that I issued to witnesses to do so. So I have my own view about the situation.

In my judgment, it would be much better to clear the matter out of the way so that there can be public confidence, and the Security Service may know that it has confidence. If there were to be an independent inquiry from outside the Security Service, I believe I know what conclusion would be reached. Because of that, and because I certainly have nothing to fear from such an inquiry, I believe that the right hon. Lady is missing a very good opportunity both to close an unhappy chapter and to open a fresh one.

I beg the right hon. Lady not to close her mind to that even now. If she does not do so, these allegations, and in some cases inventions, about the Security Service will carry on and the contents of the book will continue to be dribbled out in one country or another. Every time that happens there will be a fresh spate of allegations and charges. The Security Service and everybody else will still rest under those allegations. The right hon. Lady is stubborn in not yielding to the suggestion that an independent group should consider these matters objectively, and report to her and to the House.

I believe that my next suggestion will carry with me some Conservative Members who are chuntering: the Government should also consider for the future some oversight body which would review the work of the service, its targeting, its management, its structure and its staff counselling—and if anything was needed, goodness knows, that is. The right hon. Lady did not refer to that.

Is the right hon. Lady aware that she has given a partial reassurance by the statement she has made which was drawn out of her by my press comment this morning? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes. I ask the right hon. Lady once again to consider whether she cannot on some occasions be wrong. Would it not be better for her to accept some good natured and well intentioned advice that is offered to her?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for saying that, in his view, my statement goes, in his words, some way to reassure. I believe that for reasonable people it will go the whole way to reassure. Secondly, when the right hon. Gentleman was responsible for the security services, on that day 10 years ago when he appeared at this Dispatch Box and answered, he refused to institute an inquiry. He was right to refuse, and he knows that he was right to refuse. That is the tragedy of it. He knows that tradition has been for all Prime Ministers to refuse such requests. Let me quote Harold Macmillan:

> "It is dangerous and bad for our general national interest to discuss these matters. Otherwise we would risk destroying services which are of the utmost value to us."

[The Prime Minister]

That, I believe, is correct.

Ten years ago the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) made a much shorter statement than mine. He was right not to allow an inquiry then. If every Prime Minister says, "This is the result of my inquiry; I will not have a further inquiry," and 10 years later reopens the matter, there will be no assurance whatsoever in anything said from this Box.

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): Does my right hon. Friend accept that those hon. Members on both sides of the House who know the present director-general will agree with her and with the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) that he is a man of exceptional intelligence and integrity? Has she had any communication from the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth about whether, if the inquiry were held in private—I assume that that is what he wishes—those who share the Opposition Benches with him would accept the result of the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: Some people would never be satisfied and would go on raising matters again and again. Some people—I totally exclude the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) from this—wish to undermine the security services. This is their way of doing it. I have made it clear that I do not intend to institute a further inquiry. It is not necessary; it is not justified.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): If Parliament is to accept that the security services return to the previous situation when there were no questions and debates in the House, surely it has to be satisfied as to its objective scrutiny. Is not that the fundamental point? Will the Prime Minister at least look deeper into the more profound matter of parliamentary scrutiny of the security services? If she were to give a little ground over that matter, on which there is a great deal of bipartisan support, many of us—I can speak only personally—would accept the word and integrity of the present director-general. He does not come from the security services and, to that extent, is outside it. I personally accept his judgment on this particular, though narrow, issue.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he said about accepting the assurance of the director-general and, therefore, accepting what I have said from the Dispatch Box. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary dealt with the other matter from the Dispatch Box, in reply to a debate on security matters.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Bearing in mind the contrast between the position taken by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan) when he had all the power and authority of a Prime Minister—I was content to accept that fact at the time—and his equivocal attitude now, does my right hon. Friend think that the only possible explanation is that he has unhappily been leaned on by a shadow Cabinet that is desperate for some political advantage?

The Prime Minister: I have said that I accept the advice that I have been given. I take the opportunity of reasserting total confidence in the Security Service. I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Prime Minister has reminded the House that, in July 1977, two articles appeared in *The Observer* and thus were public knowledge. They were mentioned on the Floor of the House by the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and, I believe, two other hon. Members. The matters that were raised on the Floor of the House and were inquired into were public knowledge. If there is nothing new in Mr. Wright's book, why not let it be published?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is well aware that, if we did not contest the case of a former member of the service who, owing a lifelong duty of confidentiality to the Crown, wished to give an account of anything it suited him to say, there would be no security services left in the kingdom.

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that all the events that are the subject of the present allegations took place under a Labour Government and were inquired into by a Labour Prime Minister, and that all the personalities involved were either Labour supporters or even Ministers? Is it not a fact, therefore, that the Government have nothing to fear from having an inquiry? Are not the difficulties of an inquiry that, if it is to be a public inquiry, the interests of the Security Service will seriously be put at risk, and, if it is to be a private inquiry, it is unlikely to satisfy anybody and might be misunderstood as a cover-up?

The Prime Minister: I confirm that the events referred to took place before my time in office as Prime Minister. I therefore have no responsibility for them. I have responsibility for the morale of and confidence in the Security Service, and I gladly reassert that confidence. I had hoped that, in a bipartisan spirit, the whole House would do so, because we owe a great deal to those who work in those services.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I think that the Prime Minister is making a grave mistake in not responding to the appeal of my right hon. Friend, and I still hope that she will, in a few days, change her mind on this subject, as she has changed it already, but what will she and her Law Officers now do about the newspapers in this and other countries that continue to discuss the matter? Are we to have an endless series of prosecutions against three newspapers in this country which are determined to continue discussing the matter freely, as they have done over the past few weeks? Does she think that that will be a service to our security services?

The Prime Minister: There are those who wish to undermine the security services, and they will go on and on regardless of any inquiry. Their purpose is different from ours, which is to uphold the security services. The security and intelligence services deserve our recognition and gratitude.

I have made a longer statement about this matter, in more detail, than any previous Prime Minister. I ask the House to accept it with the bipartisan attitude that Ministers in the previous Labour Administration expected and received from us.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard for the subsequent business of the House. The private notice question is an extension of Question Time, and we have

now had over 25 minutes on it. I must have regard to the fact that we have before us a very important debate on Northern Ireland, and that there is a great demand from right hon. and hon. Members to take part in it. We must now move on.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear what is being said.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During your Speakership, you have always said that you are a champion of Back Benchers. Is it satisfactory that only Privy Councillors should ask questions on a subject such as this?

Mr. Speaker: Order. There will be other opportunities, even tomorrow, for Back Benchers to ask questions about the matter. I must have regard to other hon. Members. This is not the only important topic that hon. Members wish to discuss.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that the mood is very bitter over what is seen by some of my colleagues as an attempt at a cover-up. It seems an abuse to the House that many of the Back Benchers who have been most prominent in the investigations and inquiries which have led to today's statement have been denied the opportunity to ask supplementary questions. I think that you should reconsider your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows that for private notice questions I normally allow no more than 15 minutes. This is an extension of Question Time. If it had been a statement, it would be a different matter. I have to have regard for all hon. Members in this House. I appreciate that this is a matter of much interest to many hon. Members, but there will be other opportunities to discuss it. The House may not have another opportunity for an Irish debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the point of order of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to place on record how much I regret the fact that today I was not allowed to ask the Prime Minister a question.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. For some weeks my hon. Friends and I have felt strongly that we have been gagged, though not by you, and that we have been unable to make the points that we wanted to make arising from the very serious allegations in Mr. Wright's book. It is a shame and a scandal that hon. Members are being gagged and that they cannot raise matters that should be raised as part of their parliamentary duty. The Prime Minister has made a statement today. It may be that she was most reluctant to make it, but not a single Member who was not a Privy Councillor was called from this side of the House. If serious allegations are being made — and they will continue to be made — surely Members of Parliament have the right to use every opportunity to question the Prime Minister. We are being gagged.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that he is not being gagged. There will be other opportunities, at Prime Minister's Question Time, to ask questions. If any right hon. or hon. Members feel that they are being gagged, it may be the Ulster Members, who have an equal right to the time of this House.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have helpfully said that there will be oher opportunities to raise the matter. Would it be in order now for an hon. Member to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 so that it may be dealt with as an urgent matter?

Mr. Speaker: I have had no application today for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20. Questions are put to the Prime Minister twice every week. Arising out of her statement today, there will be plenty of opportunities for Back Benchers to ask further questions on the matter.

Mr. Dalyell: May I formally move, Mr. Speaker, the Adjournment of the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard for every hon. Member, and I have to be fair to the whole House. This is a day on which we have an important Irish debate. The Ulster Members are back with us, and they have an equal claim to the time of this House.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I listened with respect, Mr. Speaker, to what you said. All hon. Members welcome back the Ulster Unionists. We never asked them to leave, but, as I say, we welcome them back.

There is a precedent which I call to your mind. When Lord Wilson was Prime Minister, we had a debate on the Crown Agents which arose from a statement that was made on the Floor of the House. There was no opportunity to make an application to the then Speaker, as would have been the practice. Mr. Speaker allowed the then Member of Parliament for Penistone, Mr. John Mendelson, to move his Standing Order No. 9, as it then was, so that the House could debate the statement that had been made. Because of that precedent, and in view of what you have said to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I ask you at least to allow him to move his motion and then to reach your decision.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Foulkes: You have, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Where is it? [HON. MEMBERS: "Here it comes."] Application under Standing Order No. 20, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Dalyell: I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the Prime Minister to initiate an independent inquiry."

I have first to persuade you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is urgent. It is self-evident, from the attitude of the House, that this subject will not go away and that it will have to be discussed before the general election.

Secondly, I have to persuade you that it is important. The Prime Minister left a number of gaps in her statement. Some of us are very concerned about our former colleagues—for example, about the forged bank account

[Mr. Dalyell]

of Lord Glenamara, who was Ted Short. The Prime Minister will not even refer that matter to the Security Commission. In the absence of a public inquiry, some of us would like to debate why these matters should not be referred to the Security Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Griffiths of Govilon. Furthermore, why is it that the cases of Colin Wallace and Fred Holroyd cannot be referred to the Security Commission?

It is very important that we should have a debate, because in public print the Prime Minister has been personally involved on account of the information that was acquired from Colin Wallace by Airey Neave in relation to "Clockwork Orange 2". There should be a parliamentary explanation of these matters. Perhaps there is an explanation. Our fellow citizens have been reading about the involvment of Airey Neave in all these matters. That is an added reason why there should be a public inquiry.

Finally, I have to persuade you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is definite. We had to wait until this new information was winkled out of the Prime Minister—indeed, chiselled out of her—by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Sir J. Callaghan), who had every justification for saying that, until he made his statement, the House of Commons and the British people would have been told little about it. There is much new information. If, therefore, it is to be treated properly, Parliament ought to have a debate on the matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the Prime Minister to initiate an independent inquiry."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would you care to contemplate, Sir, why some hon. Members are less entitled to raise points of order than others? I was on my feet for 10 minutes.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is very frequently called on points of order.

BILL PRESENTED

Secretary of State for Education and Science (Qualifications for Office)

Mr. Barry Sheerman, supported by Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Frank Dobson, Mr. Allan Roberts, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Willie W. Hamilton, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. George Park, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Allen McKay and Mr. Allan Rogers, presented a Bill to provide that no person shall be appointed to the office of Secretary of State for Education and Science whose children are being, or have been, educated at private schools: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 May, and to be printed. Bill [151.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Water (Fluoridation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Job Release Act 1977 (Continuation) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Freedom of Information

4.9 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to repeal section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and institute a right of access for citizens to information related to the workings and decisions of government, with certain specified exceptions; and for connected purposes.

It is, of course, peculiarly appropriate, in the light of the statement that we have just heard from the Prime Minister, that we should be discussing this issue today, of all days. We have been powerfully reminded this afternoon of the intensely secretive nature of the British governmental apparatus and the arrogance of power that has affected this Government above all others. We need to open up the workings of Government to the maximum legitimate public scrutiny. At present, the presumption is that everything is secret unless the Government graciously decide that the public should be allowed to know. That is the wrong way round. The assumption should be that everything is in the public domain unless there are genuine —I stress genuine—security reasons why it should not be. My Bill seeks to secure precisely that change.

Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act has become notorious. It is absurd that secretive legislation should cover every action and every item that crosses civil servants' desks. The catch-all absurdity of the legislation alone should ensure its repeal. However, the situation is, of course, much more dangerous than that, because section 2 can be, and has been, used by Governments of all political persuasions to cover up political embarrassment rather than for reasons connected with real national security issues. Why did this Government prosecute Sarah Tisdall and Clive Ponting? Why did they use section 2 to obtain warrants to ransack the offices of the *New Statesman* and the home of Duncan Campbell? Why have this Government made greater use of section 2 than any other Government in our history?

The 12 ordinary men and women who acquitted my constituent Clive Ponting two years ago threw the Government into considerable confusion. Effectively, the jury challenged the Government once and for all to draw the line between matters of political embarrassment or advantage and matters of genuine national importance. The Government have failed to draw that line, and today's statement by the Prime Minister has simply confirmed that fact.

My Bill, coming at the outset of what may be a general election campaign, seeks to challenge all parties in the House to state where they stand on this issue. Do they stand for over-secrecy, which is what we have at the moment, or for the fullest possible openness in Government? In a democracy, surely the answer must be crystal clear. Citizens must have the fullest possible access to information about what the Government and the governors are doing. The British people do not have anything approaching such access at present; they should have it. My Bill is a small step towards ensuring that that happens at long last.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Robin Cook, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Ian Mikardo, Mr. Peter Pike and Ms. Jo Richardson.

Freedom of Information

Mr. Chris Smith accordingly presented a Bill to repeal secion 2 of the Official Secrets Act and institute a right of access for citizens to information related to the workings and decisions of government, with certain specified exceptions; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 July, and to be printed. [Bill 150.]

Northern Ireland (Security)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before we commence the debate, I must tell the House that there is a long list of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part. I ask all hon. Members to be brief in their speeches so that as many as possible may be called.

4.17 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I welcome the opportunity to initiate this debate on the security situation in Northern Ireland. Not least against the background of recent events, it is absolutely right that we should be having the debate today. I welcome the fact that right hon. and hon. Members from the Province will be participating. This matter is of great concern to the people of the Province and it is therefore right that it should be debated in Parliament. We know that strong views are held on this issue and that there will be strong disagreements on many of its aspects. That makes it all the more important that it should be discussed in the House of Commons.

In putting before the House the issues involved, it is my duty first to put the facts before the House and to help the House to reach a balanced and objective view of the security situation and of the progress that has been made in these difficult matters. Against the background of horror at one outrage or another — sadly, Northern Ireland has seen far too many outrages — it is understandable that emotions will dominate the debate. We owe it to all those who have suffered and all those in the security forces who have striven to serve their community, to look at the issues as clearly and fairly as we can. All of us who are familiar with the Province know that a series of successes by the security forces can lead to a sense of over-confidence about the early prospect of defeating terrorism. However, while it is a mistake to get too elated by a success, it is also wrong to get too downhearted by setbacks. We have a duty to examine the situation and to base our decisions on the fairest possible assessment.

In no sense do my remarks imply in any way that there is any such thing as an acceptable level of violence. Any murder is one too many, with all the human tragedy that it involves. I make it absolutely clear that our determination is to pursue our efforts until such time as terrorism is destroyed and real peace is restored to Northern Ireland and to the whole island of Ireland.

I begin by reminding the House of the background—the developments in the security situation and the tragic statistics — against which this debate takes place. To enable us to see just what have been the achievements of the security forces, of the steadfastness and resilience of the community and of the direction of security policy, we must consider the progress that has been achieved. Any hon. Member who studies the casualty figures will be struck immediately by the situation in 1972, the gravest year of all, when 467 people were killed—146 members of the security forces and 321 civilians. Last year, there were 24 deaths among the security forces. That is 24 too many, but by any standards it is a vast improvement on the situation some years earlier. The period to the end of March this year was the lowest first quarter for casualties in the security forces in any recent year, although I am the first to inform the House, as it well knows, that since then, sadly, there has been a serious deterioration, a serious level of casualties and clear evidence of a new ruthlessness in the campaign of violence that we face, including certain changes of tactics which we need to assess and to meet as effectively and speedily as we can.

It is right to set those achievements against the horrific level of violence in earlier years and to recognise how much the Province and, indeed, the whole country owe to the unstinting efforts, courage and determination of the security forces to whom we all owe the greatest debt. The problems and challenges that we face should not be considered only against the background of the terrible statistics of violence. We should also assess the progress and developments that have taken place as we sought to resist the campaign of terror launched principally by the IRA and the achievements of that organisation in pursuit of its objectives and the cause that it has sought to promote.

When the campaign was embarked on with all its evil intent, the IRA must have had certain objectives, and it is worth reflecting on the progress or otherwise that has been made towards those objectives. The most elementary initial objective was surely to undermine the morale of the RUC, to spread disaffection among the Army and to create reluctance and unwillingness to serve in Northern Ireland. Another objective was surely to attract ever-increasing support from the nationalist community as well as wider international support, particularly from the Government of the Irish Republic. Twenty years on in that evil campaign, we can see that in each if those objectives the IRA has completely failed.

The RUC undoubtedly faced problems and difficulties at the start of the campaign, but one can have only the greatest admiration for the way in which it has come through that time of trial to be recognised as an outstandingly competent, highly trained, well-motivated police force with high morale, widely respected for the stand that it has taken against terrorism and for its courage and professionalism—a force for which there is substantial support across the community and which has not the slightest difficulty in attracting more recruits to serve the community.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, as I am sure is every member of the RUC, for his tribute to that force. His words, which I am sure are sincere, would carry more weight if his office would occasionally listen to the views of members of the RUC who do the dying for us. He should also realise that he does not help RUC morale, which I know he wishes to maintain, if, as he will be doing later today, he fastens on the RUC discriminatory action which would not be acceptable to the police in England and Wales.

Mr. King: I am sorry that my hon. Friend put his intervention in that way. He will forgive me if I do not go into the second matter as it will be the subject of a second debate. I recall that the last time I discussed these matters with my hon. Friend was in the presence of deputation from the Police Federation which I was more than ready and willing to meet. Members and officers of the Police Federation know that I am always ready to meet them and to discuss problems of concern. Of course I am willing to meet people on issues of importance and of course I

respect the role played by the RUC. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks in that respect. My support and commitment to the RUC are absolute—I wish to make that completely clear—and I am fully aware of the crucial role that it plays in the front line against terrorism.

The IRA's second objective was to develop a reluctance to serve in Northern Ireland — the "troops out" movement perhaps—and to create disaffection in the British Army. Anyone who has the slightest contact with the Regular Army and with the Ulster Defence Regiment knows, however, of the commitment and support that exists and of the high morale and enthusiastic response of the Army to the soldiering tasks that it so readily takes on in the province. One of the most encouraging developments has been the increasing professionalism as well as the notable courage shown by the UDR in its extremely tough role.

Thirdly, how well has the IRA done in seeking to spread disaffection among the nationalist community, to isolate the security forces from any support in that community and to have itself increasingly recognised as the voice of that community? Whatever levels of support it may have had in the past, I have the clearest impression that that support has diminished very greatly in the nationalist community. More and more people now see the IRA as offering just one guarantee to the people whose support it seeks — the guarantee of misery and continuing high unemployment. People are more and more aware of the unholy mismatch of a Mafia-type organisation operating rackets in drinking and gaming clubs and bogus protection firms with a Marxist terrorist group determined to impose its narrow views on people throughout the island of Ireland with complete indifference to the views of the majority.

It is worth remembering, when the IRA says that it has some right to speak for the people of Ireland, just how tiny a majority it represents not only in Northern Ireland but in the Irish Republic where it polled only 1.8 per cent. of the vote. To its humiliation, its total number of votes in the last elections in Northern Ireland — the district council elections — and in the vote for the Dail amounted to only 3 per cent. of the vote. The conceit, as the *Irish Press* said, of publishing a document called, "Scenario for Peace", which the *Irish Press* described correctly as an ultimatum for peace! The attitude of the IRA and Sinn Fein, is, "We do not care what you think; we will tell you what you should think and we will kill you until you think it." That is the proposition that it has the gall to put before the people, and that is why it will not succeed.

If we look at the background against which it has sought to enlist increasing international support, the reality is that the perception of it as an international Marxist revolutionary group is now, thank God, increasingly prevalent around the world. It may possibly have support from President Gaddafi; it may have associations with other groups around the world; but it does not enjoy the support of any decent, civilised country in the world.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement marks the complete repudiation of the IRA by the United Kingdom and the Government of the Irish Republic, and that has been underlined firmly by the new Government in the Irish Republic in recent weeks. It is a measure of that repudiation by the international community that the House will have noticed the increasing success that we have had in international co-operation. I am not referring just to the supplementary extradition treaty which was passed through the United States Senate with such an overwhelming majority. I am not referring to the new extraditions which have been achieved from the United States and Holland. The House will be aware of the support that we have had from police forces in the United States, France, Germany and Holland.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): The Secretary of State will be aware that one of the Government's objectives for the Anglo-Irish Agreement is an improvement in co-operation between security forces on both sides of the border. Can he point to any great improvement in that? Anecdotal evidence from members of the British security forces would suggest that, if anything, the situation has become worse rather than better.

Mr. King: My hon. Friend takes a close interest in this matter, but to suggest that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was to be a wand that would have an immediate impact of a major, significant early change—*[Interruption.]* There have been successes. I can point to a steady, growing, and encouraging list of Garda seizures of explosives and mortars which undoubtedly have resulted from increased co-operation. I rely on and respect the advice of the Chief Constable. He says—he is uniquely placed to make this judgment—that the present opportunity is the best that there has ever been for developing close co-operation, which is one of the ingredients which will help in the fight against terrorism.

Some hon. Members raise the issue of cross-border terrorism as though it was the sole source of terrorism and as though terrorism was not originating from within the Province. Anyone who is taking part in this debate knows only too well the problems that are faced in countering the skill, determination and fanaticism of the terrorists in routing them out, even from within the Province where we have complete responsibility in those respects.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): Of course there are incidents in Northern Ireland, but can the Secretary of State give the source of the explosives that are used in those incidents? They come from across the border.

Mr. King: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has made that suggestion, because it is not true. We believe that a significant amount of explosives come from across the border, but we also believe—the hon. Gentleman must be aware of this—that a significant amount are also produced in the Province. We and the RUC are determined to prevent that, but it is a mistake to believe that everything originates from across the border. It is more complicated than that.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East) *rose*——

Mr. King: I shall make some progress and then I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

In reviewing the present situation I have sought to assess the progress that the terrorists have made in pursuit of what must have been their original objective. I hope that the House will accept that their progress has been nil. Far from making progress, they have lost some of the ground that originally they might conceivably have held. In terms of political progress and inciting greater support in the South, it is difficult to see how much lower they could go than 1·8 per cent. of the vote, and that is assuming that all

[Mr. King]

the people who voted for them supported the more violent ambitions of Sinn Fein. Trapped in the failure of its political initiatives and efforts, it has now reverted to what it knows best — violence and terrorism. The House should not under-estimate its evil cunning and skill. That is a clear warning, and something that many hon. Members appreciate.

What makes it such an evil and difficult enemy to fight is that it lacks any principles or scruples about how its violence might cause horrific casualties and tragedies. One can think of the complete lack of compunction that it showed that one of its mortar bombs might have hit the supermarket in Newry instead of the police station next door. Many will recall the quite horrific injuries that were caused to the small girl who was shopping there. We have seen the most recent confirmation that it has no such inhibitions as the charming and kind president of the Irish Girl Guides was murdered beside her husband, Lord Justice Gibson, at Killeen.

Faced with the humiliation that it has recently suffered in the Irish election campaign and the split in Sinn Fein between Provisional Sinn Fein and Republican Sinn Fein it is quite clear that it has embarked on a heightened level of violence. It is true to say that the level of incidents was rising quite significantly towards the end of last year, but the determined and courageous efforts of the security forces prevented a number of those incidents leading to casualties. Sadly, as we all know, there have been a number of attacks recently and some have led to serious casualties. The House will be very familiar with those attacks.

Against that background I want to explain to the House how we should respond to the present situation. First, I want to refer to security policy. The security policy followed by successive Governments has been to fight terrorism with all the appropriate resources under the rule of law. One of the terrorists' objectives has always been to destroy the courts and exploit the grievances that can arise in such a situation. Part of the reason for the strong international support for our fight against terrorism has been the recognition of our determination to maintain the highest possible standards of British justice when dealing with terrorist crime.

Of course that is not easy. Of course that poses tremendous problems for the security forces and the courts in which, if I may say so, the Northern Ireland judiciary has played such a courageous part. The background to this debate is the clearest reminder of the courage shown by the Northern Ireland judiciary. Of course there are always attractions to try to find some different route outside of the present law. However, we have a very heavy responsibility before we make changes, to be sure that what looks like a quick or more effective approach does not create bigger problems for the future.

An effective response is essential to adapt to the new situation. However, the wrong reaction could all too easily be counter-productive and play into the hands of the terrorist. That is why we are continuing to consider ways in which the work of the security forces can be helped to bring terrorists before the courts. While maintaining fair treatment under the law, we will ensure that if terrorists are found guilty, they are subject to the full rigour of the law. I do not propose to comment any further on those matters now. However, I hope that the House has listened carefully to what I have said and will be under no illusions about the seriousness with which I regard that aspect of the problem.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The right hon. Gentleman has now been speaking for almost half an hour. Will he now get away from his exercise of rewriting history and making excuses for doing nothing about terrorism? Will he start from the premise that no deaths were caused by terrorism in Ulster before the Westminster Government took over full control of security and that the large death toll in 1972 to which he referred related to the fact that Westminster took over the entire administration of Northern Ireland? Will he stop hiding behind his compliments to the security forces, the judiciary and the various other people in Northern Ireland, who certainly deserve his compliments but who know that what he is saying is simply an excuse for doing nothing?

We came here to hear whether the right hon. Gentleman had any concrete proposals to deal with terrorism. He has said that terrorists will be brought before the courts. One hundred and forty-two out of 156 deaths in my constituency are still unsolved. That is a measure of the power of the courts at the moment. Will the right hon. Gentleman give the courts more power?

Mr. King: I think that the hon. Gentleman decided to intervene before he listened to my comments. This is an aspect——

Mr. Maginnis: The right hon. Gentleman has said nothing yet.

Mr. King: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is particularly interested in this matter. It is a pity that he did not listen to my comments. I do not honestly believe that the House will accept his version of history that this all started when this Parliament became involved.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I have listened with great care to the Secretary of State's comments. However, he will understand that there have been repeated reports, not least emanating from Mr. Colin Wallace and Mr. Fred Holroyd, that on odd occasions our security forces did not operate within the law. In particular, I refer the Secretary of State to *The Sunday Times* of 26 April. I would like to have the attention of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley) because I will refer to him. That article refers to the fact that there was a forged bank account relating to the hon. Member for Antrim, North. That information has come into the possesion of some hon. Members. I cannot make a judgment one way or another and neither can other hon. Members. It is up to the Secretary of State to assure all of us today that the allegations made by Fred Holroyd, Colin Wallace and others—*[Interruption.]* It is all very well for some hon. Members to sneer. The allegations have been made and I am asking a question. If a public inquiry is not to be set up, can the Government assure the House on these matters during this debate, not least with regard to the forged bank account belonging to the hon. Member for Antrim, North?

Mr. King: The House is aware of the hon. Gentleman's tenacity on these matters. I would prefer to deal with the issues before the House. My hon. Friend the Minister of State may make an appropriate comment in his concluding remarks, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to consider the background to certain other steps that we are taking. The fight against terrorism depends on sustaining pressure on a number of different fronts. One of the crucial areas is the interdiction of weapons and the inhibition of weapons supply. As I have said, we are very grateful for the international co-operation that has successfully obstructed shipments of arms from the United States, Holland and France. I am also very grateful for the efforts and co-operation of the Irish Government and the work of the Garda and the significant number of recoveries of weapons, arms and primed mortars that the Garda have identified. I can announce to the House that I was speaking only today again to the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Lenihan, and we discussed security matters. The security heads will meet again very shortly to carry their work further forward.

One of the key issues that we are also anxious to tackle relates to financial resources. Financial resources are the life blood of terrorism and we are taking a number of measures to reduce the funds that are reaching terrorists in various ways. The House will be aware of the recent successes of the racket busting squad set up by the RUC and the recent successful prosecutions of the tax exemption certificates fraud. That is an illustration of a route to funds that we have been anxious to obstruct. We have already introduced new controls on gaming machines. The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, which is in another place at the moment, will seek to bring in new arrangements to control bogus security firms, and we have published proposals for dealing with unlicensed drinking clubs. Everyone familiar with Northern Ireland will be aware of the ways in which paramilitary organisations have sought to use those different devices as ways of increasing funds.

I want to consider certain matters that have arisen after discussions that I have held with the Chief Constable and the GOC. I want to refer to a specific measure requested by my security advisers after my visit to inspect the A1 road at the scene of the appalling outrage of the murder of Lord Justice Sir Maurice Gibson. This morning I signed a vehicle control zone order for the road between the border and the checkpoint and that has come into effect forthwith. It is now not permitted to stop anywhere along that stretch and I am considering urgently whether such orders might be made in similar situations on border roads.

Mr. Begga: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Will he tell the House how many members of the security forces accompanied him on his personal visit into no man's land, between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, following the horrific murders?

Mr. King: I do not have that figure available.

Mr. Maginnis: Over 300?

Mr. King: I thought that it was important to go and hope that the House thinks that it was right for me to go and to see properly for myself. Sadly, on every possible occasion, some hon. Members will seek—I can think of them now and have read their comments for long enough to know this—to score a political point, no matter how poor it may be. I would much prefer, and I think that the people of the Province would much prefer, that we deal with security issues seriously and that we do not always seek to score political points, but consider them objectively. I hope that I have the support of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis)—

Mr. Maginnis: Not for a shabby political stunt.

Mr. King: I hope that I have the hon. Gentleman's support because although it is only one item, it is a sensible measure to take. It is taken at the request of the security forces and I believe that it was the right action to take over one aspect that was concerning them.

Turning now to resources, the House will be aware that, following a period of reduction in the number of battalions in Northern Ireland, two additional battalions were deployed to the Provice early in 1986. Force levels are kept constantly under review, but in view of the interest in this matter I can confirm that that level of Army support will remain for as long as it is needed.

I turn now to the UDR. In recent months we have increased the permanent cadre by 150 posts, increasing the number of soldiers available for operational duties. A new permanent cadre rifle company is already being formed. In addition, yesterday the GOC called part-time members of the UDR on to voluntary permanent duty for the next few weeks. That will provide a valuable immediate increase in the force levels in support of the RUC. The effect is that part-time soldiers, who are available only for a limited eight hours a day, will be available for operations at all times. That will give much greater flexibility for operations in support of the RUC.

The Chief Constable has requested a further significant recruitment of RUC full-time reservists. The police authority for Northern Ireland informed me earlier this afternoon that, in its view, there is a case for a significant increase in the number of the RUC full-time reserve. It has yet to reach a final view on the precise number, but has recommended to me that immediate steps should be taken to start recruitment of those additional policemen. I have given immediate approval for that and recruitment will start now.

In addition, I have had discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in respect of certain additional support that he has readily agreed to provide, as requested, that will help to combat more directly the present terrorist campaign. In addition, he will be making available additional helicopter resources to improve the deployment and mobility of the security forces.

These specific items are the clearest confirmation of the Government's determination to give all possible support to security forces and to the law-abiding people of the Province in their determined resistance to the evil of terrorism.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman inform the House when those recruits will be on the streets of Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman knows that recruitment will start immediately. However, their appearance will depend on the speed at which the recruitment is carried through and on the length of training. It depends in part also on whether some of the recruits have already served, whether they need complete training or whether they are available at an earlier date. It is our concern to make sure that those extra resources are available at the earliest possible date. I give that confirmation to the hon. Gentleman.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It will take six months.

Mr. King: Recruitment starts immediately and I believe that the training period lasts eight weeks for the full-time reserve. Therefore, with effect from an early date, additional resources will be forthcoming.

I have given details of certain additional resources and support that the Government will give to the security forces, and to all the people of the Province in their resistance against the evil campaign of terrorism. Everybody in the Province, and in the United Kingdom, can play their part in this. At present, when it is clearly the determination of the terrorists to provoke the maximum reaction, I look to everybody, in any prominent position, and especially to those in the security forces, to take the fullest care and to be as vigilant as possible about their own personal security. Everyone can make that contribution.

This is also a time when everybody must recognise that the security forces serve the interests of the community as a whole. I look to everyone, to all parties, to give the fullest support, without equivocation or qualification, to the security forces in the vital work that they do on behalf of the community. There is no law-abiding person in Northern Ireland who, in the past year, has not seen for himself the way in which the RUC and the security forces have sought to provide protection, without fear or favour, to people of all communities in Northern Ireland. They deserve, and are entitled to expect, the support of all in the work that they do.

Of course, there is another way in which everybody can help. When the RUC faces the security and terrorist threats that it does, it is entitled to look for maximum support, and for the avoidance of additional problems in the area of public order. Every additional policeman, who has to become involved in public order duties, is one less policeman able to stand in the fight against terrorism. It is clear that one thing that terrorists will seek to do is to provoke public disorder, and it is the responsibility of us all to ensure that we do not give in to such provocation.

The Province has shown its ability to rise above the threats and the misery that the terrorists offer. The economic progress that has been made, in spite of the terrorists' attempts and attacks, is an inspiration to people in the Province. However, this is a time when the terrorists seek to frustrate the progress that has been made and to sow uncertainty, distrust and hatred. It is a time for steadfastness and for all responsible leaders to avoid the vacuum of creating an opportunity for doubt.

I repeat that in the current position it is important that we see not only resources coming forward, with the full support of the United Kingdom in the fight against terrorism, but we need constructive political dialogue at present so that people can see that there is a way forward, which is not the bullet and the bomb, but which is through discussion and dialogue.

This issue of security is of as great concern in this Parliament as it is in the Province of Northern Ireland, which has suffered so grievously. The duty that we owe this Parliament and our country is to discuss these issues constructively and effectively to see the best ways in which we may bring peace and prosperity to the Province.

Hon. Members: Disgusting! Disgraceful!

4.59 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): This debate is a response by the House to a series of tragic events—the deaths in recent weeks of two members of the RUC and a member of the UDR, whose offence was carrying out the duties which we entrusted to them; the death of a distinguished judge and his wife, known to some of us for many years, who paid the price of their determination to live normal lives so far as possible in abnormal circumstances; and the deaths of and injuries to civilians who were not even part of the quarrel in which they were caught up.

One purpose of the debate is to enable the House to express unanimously its horror at those events and its sympathy with the families of the victims. There are times when it is important to demonstrate that our whole community is at one in its compassion for those who suffer and its condemnation of those who inflict the suffering. That is one reason, among others, why I welcome the return to the Chamber of right hon. and hon. Members of the Unionist parties. The debate will no doubt reveal differences among us, and that is what debates are for, but that should not mislead anybody into believing that those differences extend to our reactions to indiscriminate murder.

It is important that we use the occasion, not only to record our horror, but to discuss constructively how we can most effectively protect the people of Northern Ireland from what could be an endless trail of misery and death extending far into the future. It is right that we should express our emotions, and we make no apology for that, but we should not be forgiven if we did not also apply our minds.

We should look to see what lessons there are to learn about improving security. It is easy and tempting to make superficial allegations, to find someone to blame, to dig out the scapegoats and to do what we rightly condemn others for doing—to use the loss of human life as a peg on which to hang a propaganda sheet. We need to study at greater leisure some of the matters which the Secretary of State raised today. I add my tribute to what he said of the members of the RUC and security forces who have maintained their morale in difficult circumstances over a long period.

The police establishment may need to be increased, but that is largely a technical matter which some of us may be able to judge only when we have more detailed information. I hope that the Secretary of State will find it possible to broaden the potential recruiting base and that he will address his mind to how we can make it possible, to use an oft-repeated phrase, for a young nationalist to join the police force without being any less a nationalist.

Clearly, one matter which requires to be discussed is the obsession of the authorities North and South with the precise location of the border. No one who has taken the trouble to look at the record can doubt the commitment both of the political authorities and of the security forces in Northern Ireland and the Republic to protect all the people of Ireland from political violence. The new Taoiseach and Mr. Lenihan have made clear their position, and anyone who seeks to sow dissension and recrimination between the two Governments and between the two police forces is doing no service to the cause of security.

But there have been sensitivities about the exact position of the border which are not shared by the paramilitaries. The maintenance of a no man's land is perhaps not a model for international co-operation in the last two decades of the 20th century. I hoped to hear more from the Secretary of State about the arrangements made by the two police forces for their mutual co-operation. We have still not been told why someone known to be at risk was left by the Gardai escort on the border with no arrangements for him to be met by an RUC escort until he had travelled three quarters of a mile unescorted. There may be a reason, but that necessarily raises the question whether the demarcation procedures may not have assumed excessive importance in two forces engaged together in the same purpose.

Perhaps we should explore whether the operational units engaged in security work may be made responsible to a single directorate. I am not suggesting an all-Ireland police force, although that idea does not shock me; I am asking whether it is not possible for the two forces to work as one for a specific purpose on which the two Governments are at one.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that it is, if not conventional, at least frequently the case, that a car bringing a distinguished person from the South into no-man's land is met by another car coming from the North, that radio contact is established between the two before either car moves into the no-man's land and that the two cars line up alongside each other so that the distinguished person can step from one to the other in a split second? The pertinent question is why that did not happen for Judge Gibson.

Mr. Archer: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that is a relevant question and one to which I hope we shall in due course have an answer.

That seems a more effective kind of question and perhaps a more effective proposal than one for directing more troops into Northern Ireland. The latter is an easy suggestion to make for anyone who wants to demonstrate concern, but I doubt whether it will commend itself to those who are at the sharp end of responsibility for law enforcement in Northern Ireland. For some years, there has been agreement that policing duties are best carried out by the police and that members of the armed forces should normally be held back in barracks unless they are needed for back-up. No one who has proposed sending more troops to Northern Ireland has said what they would do or what purpose would be served by having them simply waiting around in barracks.

There is another reason why that suggestion is not likely to be effective. British troops are not popular in many districts of Northern Ireland. We may argue about the reasons for that and the mistakes that may have been made in the past, but increasing the presence of military vehicles or adding to the areas where people looking out of their windows see a barracks is not likely to encourage public support for law enforcement.

Indeed, I had it put to me last weekend that, if the proper concern of members of the Unionist parties is to protect Protestant people from nationalist paramilitaries, no contribution is made to that objective by flooding nationalist areas with military vehicles.

Mr. Beggs: I should like the right hon. and learned Gentleman to understand that we are here as Unionists to ensure that security is improved for all people. We are not protesting about bad security to get better security for Protestants than for nationalists, but to improve security for all the people of Ulster.

Mr. Archer: I would not seek to dispute what the hon. Gentleman has said. I was only pointing out that if the purpose is to protect the people of one area, who, usually, unhappily, in many parts of Northern Ireland are of one community, from paramilitaries in the other community, no great purpose is served by flooding a different area with military vehicles. That was my point.

We should be exploring how more effectively we can improve security. Perhaps a degree of light in that respect is worth a great deal of heat.

The debate can serve a further purpose. It should not simply be a technical discussion about how to tighten security, still less a competition for nominating scapegoats. However we improve security, no-one will win. However many paramilitaries are detected, and convicted and imprisoned, quite properly, there will always be a reserve of young potential recruits, until we transform the world into which they are born, resolve the quarrels on which they are nurtured and deal with the grievances of the communities in which they live. If we are serious about ending the violence and offering families in Northern Ireland a secure existence, we cannot avoid addressing those wider questions.

I make no excuse for those who murder, and no one who knows me could believe that I would. I simply point out that they believe and seek to persuade those who are receptive that they are taking part in a war. If we respond with an analysis which accepts that what is happening is simply a physical struggle, we play directly into their hands. It is also a battle for hearts and minds, and we do not win hearts and minds by shouting slogans.

Last week the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), in a wise and thoughtful intervention, pointed out that one important aim of the paramilitaries is to provoke the authorities into the sort of punitive reaction that would enable them to complain and to evoke a response among the communities on whose support they depend. What I believe was in the mind of the hon. Gentleman was that the security forces have to be told that there are certain measures which they cannot carry out with impunity because one cannot defend the rule of law by risking exceeding the fringes of the rule of law. I believe he is right.

This is not the occasion to develop that theme in detail. We discussed it in our debates on the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill. If we are to win the battle for hearts and minds, we have to persuade people, particularly young people, in Northern Ireland that it is possible to build without destroying. A simplistic analysis in terms of winning a war is not enough.

Some months ago I talked with some Protestant teenagers in Belfast, who told me three things. First, they said that they hated Catholics. When I asked on what experiences they based their antagonism, it transpired that not one of them had ever met a Catholic. They were segregated where they lived. They were segregated at school.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Nonsense.

Mr. Archer: The hon. Gentleman says, "Nonsense." I met them; he did not. If he does not believe that there are

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areas where that happens, he does not know Belfast, let alone the rest of Northern Ireland. I am not talking about just one side of the sectarian divide. I have had similar experiences on the other side. They were segregated where they lived; they were segregated at school; they were segregated in their leisure activities. They did not meet Catholics where they worked because they did not have any work. The word "Catholic" was simply a label.

Then, they told me that they were attracted to armed violence. When I asked them what they thought they had to gain by taking up the gun, they asked me what they had to lose. They said that they had no jobs, no future, that they were just hanging around in that dump and why should they not take up the gun. Anyone who does not believe that there are teenagers in Northern Ireland who take that view is simply not living in the real world.

I would like to try to answer their question, and I hope that it will go out as not just my answer but as the unanimous answer of this House. It is intended not just for those Protestant teenagers because, as I said, I have heard similar reactions from those on the other side of the divide. I say two things to those young people. First, if we have a dream to fight for, a dream of anything that is worthwhile, it must be of a future where neighbour can live alongside neighbour, where people build together for the good of everyone and where people's energies are directed to creating prosperity in which everyone will have a share. No other dream is worth having, still less fighting for.

There is no way in which that sort of future can be created by terrorising people, by destroying what others are trying to build, by driving away investment or by perpetuating quarrels. Exchanging grudge for grudge, or reprisal for revenge, into eternity cannot lead to the realisation of a dream; only to a nightmare. We do not create freedom by shooting those who disagree with us and we do not bring about justice by arrogating to ourselves the right to decide who should live and who should die.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): With no right of appeal.

Mr. Archer: With no right of appeal, as my right hon. Friend said. I am sure that anyone who knows Northern Ireland understands why the folk heroes of 50 years ago were prepared to take up the gun. But their guns have not created a dream world. Even in the Republic the feuds and the politics of the past still distort the politics of the present and frustrate the politics of the future. That is my first answer to those teenagers.

Secondly, I say to them that they do not have to resort to murder. It is possible to realise a dream through constitutional, democratic politics. Our generation may not have set a very encouraging example, but there is hope within the system. Simon Bolivar and Roger Debret may be romantic figures to some of the younger generation, though even they would tell us that there is nothing romantic about blood when we see it leaking out. But in Ireland in the 1980s there is more constructive work to be done by less romantic heroes and heroines working to build bridges, to heal wounds and to improve the quality of life in local communities, sometimes at great risk to themselves, and with little recognition.

I appeal to those who distribute the news. There is a feeling that if people give their time and energy to a resource centre or a community association no one notices, but if they lead a team of bombers their names are in the headlines. We all help to create the folklore which influences those hearts and minds that we have to win. We need to say that there are ways of redressing grievances within the system of constitutional politics. But if we are to say that with any persuasiveness, we need to demonstrate that grievances can be redressed through the democratic process.

We have to make it clear that massive, chronic unemployment is not built into the fabric of the universe. It can be changed. Life on the dole does not have to be dominated by massive electricity bills and the Payment for Debt Act. We may all need to make changes to the style and content of what we have said in the past. If there is to be new hope, we all have to contribute to a new style of politics. In particular, we can encourage the activities which have sprung from the needs and initiatives of local communities.

In the last few months I have visited a number of communities where people from the local area, who do not think of themselves as engaging in politics, give their time and energy to improving life and particularly to giving young people a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging. We should listen to those people. I do not suggest that we agree with every suggestion they make, but in some cases we can encourage what they are doing at very little cost. Some of them have had their funding withdrawn without being told what is alleged against them and they feel that they have been excluded from the consultative process. I have met some of them and I am sure that they genuinely do not know why that has happened.

If the Northern Ireland Office believes that it has reasons to cut funding, it could at least discuss them with those groups. I suggest that the Northern Ireland Office even consider visiting them to see what they are doing. I visited them and I do not believe that they deceived me as to their real purpose. I stopped and talked to people on doorsteps. I do not think that they had any political axes to grind. They wanted to show me the houses where they lived, in some cases because they were proud of them and in other cases because they had problems. They told me about the schools that their children attended, about provisions for the elderly and the handicapped, and about provisions for youth clubs.

The Secretary of State was right when he said that those people have no sympathy for the paramilitaries. There is no base of sympathy there at present, but some of those people were worried about the young. They felt that nobody who was in a position to take an effective decision wanted to listen to them. That is not the way to persuade people that constitutional politics works.

We can help those who are building bridges. We can consult them at all levels. If this debate is about how to combat what is evil, it should also be about how to encourage what is good. There are officials in the NIO who go out and meet people. They are on first-name terms with people in the resource centres and the youth clubs. But we must work at it if we do not want to add to the "us and them" of the sectarian divide an "us and them" of the communities and the Government. I am not arguing for work like that as a substitute for security measures because we require both, each reinforcing the other.

There are paramilitaries who may well enjoy the violence. They revel in the power to make decisions about life and death and bask in the importance that is denied to them in any lawful way of life. They have a vested

interest in perpetuating the troubles, and their hearts and minds may be beyond our power to redeem. But they will be isolated if the genuine grievances on which they feed are removed, and if the sectarian quarrels that form their vocabulary are no longer the mainstay of political currency.

We are all part of that problem and we have to share in finding the solution. If we fail to achieve a solution, the blood of future victims will be on our hands too.

5.21 pm

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): We have been asked to be brief and I shall be, but I wish to say two or three things. First, many people will agree that this debate has a depressingly familiar ring. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is absolutely right to draw to our attention the fact that terrorist activity and its consequences in the Province are infinitely less than they were 50 years ago. However, they are still much too common. During the steady decline in the activities of terrorists over many years, there are periods when, for one reason or another, there is an upsurge. On such occasions we have general debates like this in the House.

I am certain that we shall hear from hon. Members representing the Province fearful tales of what is happening in their constituencies. They will tell us about the murder, the explosions and the mayhem and misery that is affecting their constituents. I do not blame them for that, because we cannot blame them. If that sort of thing were happening in my constituency I would do exactly the same. We shall hear about those things again in this debate and we shall pay attention to what those hon. Members say. Every hon. Member wants to try to find the sensible and best way forward, and it is about this that I want to speak.

I was glad to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State talking about the levels of the security forces. It is the easiest thing in the world to say that there are problems in Northern Ireland, that terrorist activity is increasing and that more troops are needed. Some people say that. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) does not agree with that approach and I do not agree with it either.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend say that he has the support of the Ministry of Defence for selective reinforcements. I note that he is to get more helicopters and specialised troops. That is good. It is no good just having a lot more soldiers about in Northern Ireland, for the reasons given by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West. That is because law and order and the defeat of criminals—which is what terrorists are—is a matter for the police. It is upon the police that we rely for maintaining law and order, for deterring criminals and for catching them.

I was glad to hear my right hon. Friend say that the strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary is being increased. It has been increased steadily over many years from the very low and unhappy period 15 years ago when it was almost disbanded. Any of us who know anything about the problems in Northern Ireland know that the RUC is a highly professional force and that no force in the world is more able and better skilled to deal with those problems. I have the highest possible admiration for the RUC. To hear that it is getting and will continue to get the moral and financial backing that it requested from my right hon. Friend is extremely good news.

Every policeman whom I have ever met, and I have met quite a few, tells me the same thing—that he can do his job efficiently and well only if he has the support of the public. The community hires men to put on uniforms and maintain the law, but unless we actively support them they cannot do the job properly. Every policeman knows that. In that area more could be done and more is being done.

I think that at least 99 per cent. of the people in Northern Ireland want nothing better than to live in peace and quiet and to feel safe and secure. Many people may say that I am exaggerating, but I do not think so. About 1·5 million people live in the Province and 1 per cent. of that is 15,000.

Rev William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): One hundred thousand voted for Sinn Fein.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: Does anybody seriously maintain that there are more than 15,000 people in the Province whose sole desire is to get their way by engaging in terrorist activity?

Rev William McCrea: Yes.

Sir H. Atkins: That is most interesting and represents a considerable change from what I was told when I was there by hon. Members who are now in the House. Do they say that there are more than 15,000 active terrorists in the Province?

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): No.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: That is what I am talking about and I do not believe that there are. There is a small number of active terrorists, a lot less than 15,000. Somebody with more knowledge than I have may be able to give a more accurate figure, but I do not think so.

The people who desire to get their way by shooting, causing explosions and killing, and who are trying to do that all the time form a small number. I have said that 99 per cent. of Northern Ireland's people want to live in peace, and any hon. Member who wants to may correct me on that. Anything that anybody can do to harness their good will and desires to the support, principally of the police but of course of any other security force, should do it. The more we or anybody attempts to do that, the better. Who can do that? I suspect that the people who can do it most effectively are the community leaders in Northern Ireland.

My right hon. Friend and his Ministers are not leaders of the community any more than I was when I was there. He is, as I was, the authority, the man with the power to say that this shall be done and that shall not be done. But neither he nor I nor any of our Ministers are community leaders because we are not of the community. As I said when I was there, that was one of the unhappy things about the way the Province was run. As hon. Members know, one of my dearest ambitions was to get rid of that responsibility.

Given that my right hon. Friend is not a leader of the community, who is? A number of people are. Perhaps one thinks instantly of church leaders. After all, almost everybody in Northern Ireland is a Christian, although the people practise their Christianity in different ways. Therefore, the leaders of Christianity are the leaders of the community. From what I now observe in all branches of the Christian religion, the leaders are now moving from the positions that some of them occupied to a position of great support and encouragement. In that context I think

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particularly of two Roman Catholic bishops that I know, both of whom are giving every good lead. They are to be encouraged in everything they do, and other church leaders must also be encouraged.

The House is principally concerned with Northern Ireland's political leaders who are here now. Therein lies the difficulty, because as everybody knows, in Northern Ireland there is one political question that stands miles above any other. Here in the House we argue about all manner of things all the time — about Government priorities, how money should be spent, what should be done here, there, and everywhere; but the political question that is supreme in Northern Ireland has nothing to do with such matters. It is about whether the Province should continue to belong to the United Kingdom or become part of the Republic — that is the dominating issue.

I suggest that the political leaders of the Province might consider putting that question on one side, for a moment. They should not abandon it, because it cannot be abandoned, but they should put it aside temporarily. Some hon. Members may disagree with me, but a change in the status of Northern Ireland — from being part of the United Kingdom to being part of the Republic — will not happen.

There are two reasons why such a change will not occur.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): It has happened already.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: My hon. Friend says that it has happened already, but I remind him that Northern Ireland is still a part of the United Kingdom.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I should have thought that when a virtual condominium had been established over a Province of the United Kingdom there had been a change of status.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: If it had been, there would have been; but it has not.

There are two reasons why the change will not happen. First, it impresses me that all members of the Government have, for eight years now—including myself when I was a member of it — been firm in their belief that such a change would not happen. I still believe that; so does my right hon. Friend; and so do all Members of the Government. Some people may doubt that, so let us consider what the change would entail.

Even if the Government abandoned everything that they had said, there is no way in which the Republic of Ireland would welcome the Province as a part of it. Why? Because the Republic would acquire, as citizens, Members such as the hon. Members for Mid-Ulster (Rev. W. McCrea) and for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley), who are dedicated opponents of it. I do not for one second believe that any Government of the Republic would want to add to the three million people that they already rule 1·5 million people, of whom one million do not want anything to do with it. So, it will not happen.

If the political leaders of the Province — from whatever side—could find it in their hearts to leave that issue on one side for the moment and address themselves to the matter that I am discussing, it would be possible to bring everyone together, to have a campaign against violence and in support of the security forces and to seek a better form of government, if that is what the people want. The terrorist cannot survive, let alone do damage, if he does not have the support of more than 1 per cent. of the population. That, to me, seems a possible way forward, if only people would agree to do it.

5.33 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Langan Valley): There might be something to be said for the point made by the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins)—that we might examine the possibility of setting aside the contentious issue in Northern Ireland: that of which nation we want to belong to. As the right hon. Gentleman used the words "set aside", I hope that he will support me in suggesting that the most effective way of setting the issue aside would be to set aside the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which perpetuates it.

I am sure that most right hon. and hon. Members know by now that it is not in my nature to make bitter personal attacks on right hon. and hon. Members; but I have a duty to the House, to the Government and to the people whom we represent in Northern Ireland to be forthright and honest, in an attempt to ensure that the debate is somehow put on rails if it is to achieve anything in the way of safeguarding the lives of those who might yet be murdered in Northern Ireland.

That is why I must say, with great respect to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, that it would have been wiser for him not to have made his opening speech. It reflected all the confusion and contradictions of his Department — contradictions and confusion that have bedevilled the Northern Ireland Office since 1972. Since that time, the Department has blundered from one gross miscalculation to another. It has spawned one initiative after another, oblivious of reasoned advice to the contrary and to the inevitability of failure.

The real significance of the speech made by the Secretary of State is that his Department has perhaps finally realised that the latest and most disastrous of all the initiatives—the Anglo-Irish Agreement—is now coming apart at the seams. That should be seen in the context of the assertion made by Mr. Lenihan, the Irish Foreign Minister, when he returned to Dublin from his visit to Stormont and gave a press conference in which he said some interesting things. He said that a task force was going to be established to look at security co-operation because nothing had been done so far. Those were his horrifying words; and that is what many of us in the House suspected, but we did not expect confirmation from that quarter. However, that is what was meant by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

If the debate achieves nothing else, it may stimulate fresh and more realistic thinking, not only in the Northern Ireland office but in some other Departments of State that have intervened with utterly disastrous results in the affairs of Northern Ireland during the past 17 or 18 years. I hope and expect that those Departments will, after calm reflection, decide to wipe the slate clean and at long last be relieved of all those dreary clichés that were rehearsed by the Secretary of State, as they have been by practically all his predecessors during the past 15 years.

In the debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement on 26 November, 1985, some ten days after the signing of the agreement in my constituency, I explained that my colleagues and I were opposed to the so-called accord.

That was a strange name for the agreement, because it will destroy any possibility of peace, stability and reconciliation—three words that I thought at that time had found their way by accident into the preamble of the accord. As an ex-printer, I assumed that their inclusion resulted from a printer's error, because it seemed incredible that any rational person could ever imagine for one moment that the Anglo-Irish accord, as drafted, would produce anything but the opposite of peace, stability and reconciliation — because the three are interdependent. There can be no reconciliation without stability and peace.

I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) gave what was, perhaps, unintentionally, a completely distorted picture of Northern Ireland and of young people there. I think that with hindsight he would have to admit that he would have to search diligently in Northern Ireland to find a group of people that would express themselves in the way in which the young people that he mentioned put their views to him. I admit that they could be found in tiny pockets, but they are by no means typical of the young people in Northern Ireland, of either community.

The reconciliation, political or private, between those who wish to belong to this nation and those who want to belong to another would be difficult enough in normal times, but reconciliation and political co-operation are utter impossibilities when the very status of those most involved has been altered without their consent.

In the debate on 26 November 1985, the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition quoted the then Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, Dr. FitzGerald, as saying:

"No sane person would wish to change the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of its people. That would be a recipe for disaster and could, I believe, lead only to a civil war that would be destructive of the life of people throughout our island."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 753.]

The Leader of the Opposition agreed with those words, which were said in the Dail, and so did I. I agreed also with the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) who, when he gave evidence to the Grand Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly, expressed the view that the status of the people of Northern Ireland had been changed by the agreement. I am not using that argument against the hon. Gentleman, because there is widespread agreement now that that is the position.

Believe it or not, after about 18 months, there is agreement in Northern Ireland on that issue. Nationalists claim and Unionists complain that the status of the people has been changed and that it is disingenuous to argue that in a fine technical sense the actual territory has not yet changed hands. The diktat, the accord, was designed to apply pressure, not to the territory, but to the population and its leaders, who were referred to by the right hon. Member for Spelthorne. The designers reckoned and reasoned that, as the thumb screws were tightened, the victims would give in. The designers should not derive too much comfort from the odd screech from the torture chamber. They must be told quietly but firmly—I am not speaking only for myself now — that those who really count in our community in Northern Ireland have not the slightest intention of giving in now or ever.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could define more clearly what he means by "those who really count in Northern Ireland."

Mr. Molyneaux: I mean those who are charged with the awful responsibility of leadership. I mean those in whom the people of Northern Ireland, rightly or wrongly, have reposed their confidence. I am assuring those people through the medium of the House of Commons that those of us who have been given that responsibility will never betray the trust that has been placed in us.

It is not our determined opposition to it but the change in status that has made stability the second casualty of the agreement. So do not, please, blame the natives for the uncertainty. The same doubts exist in the minds of potential industrial investors from Great Britain and further afield. They listen politely to good reasons why their new factories should be built in Northern Ireland, then invariably pose the question, "To whom will the territory itself belong in five years time?"

Such has been the obliteration of reconciliation and stability, but uppermost in our minds is the often promised product of the agreement, that of peace. We have had 18 months of the agreement, but we have not peace but the sword. Was it not the promise of peace that persuaded 473 hon. Members to approve the agreement, or at least, to use that blessed phrase that was used so often by so many of them, to give it a try? That phrase has been applied so often to one initiative after another.

Perhaps it is because I am an older hand than my colleagues that I do not share all their views and am not downcast by the result of the vote that followed the signing of the agreement. Being older than any of my colleagues, I can remember the autumn of 1938, when there was a vote that showed that the House can sometimes get it slightly wrong. The first Viscount Simon describes in his memoirs the scene when Chamberlain went to the Commons with a message from Hitler inviting him to a third summit—they were having summits even then. He wrote:

"There followed a demonstration, the like of which I have never seen in the House of Commons . . . From all sides there was impetuous cheering, in which few failed to join, and we adjourned almost at once by general consent."

Later, Viscount Simon records that at the end of the debate following Chamberlain's return with the peace-in-our-time scrap of paper, the Munich agreement was approved by 369 votes to 150. Viscount Simon breaks down the 150 votes—the Opposition will be glad to hear this—and states that they consisted of 149 Labour votes plus the vote of Lloyd George.

Fleet street enthusiastically supported the decision, as did the dominions, and there was even a letter from the President of the United States of America. It is not clear whether he enclosed any dollars as a reward to the Czechs for being so positive, so constructive and so flexible and for saying yes when they might have said no.

The 149 Labour Members who opposed the Munich agreement, plus Lloyd George, were probably lectured on their duty to obey the sovereign will of Parliament, but they did not give in. They preserved their integrity, thus saving themselves the humiliation of the 369 men of Munich who, within six months, decided that the sovereign will of the same Parliament required them to stand on their heads. The lesson of all that would appear to be that if peace is to be established it will have to rest on something less fickle than a mere expression of parliamentary opinion.

Some hon. Members who represent constituencies in Great Britain can, if they wish, continue to regard Northern Ireland as a faraway province of which they

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know little and care even less. They may find it tempting to rush to the tape machine to check the latest cricket scores and to ignore the paragraph reporting the murder of two Ulster policemen. Nothing that I can say will alter their priorities. However, perhaps I might venture to remind them that they have a twofold duty to their constituents. First, they have a duty to all who reside within their constituency boundaries to ensure that their safety is not put at risk by hon. Members appearing to condoae the appeasement of terrorists, whose spokesmen have stated their conclusion that one bomb in England is worth 100 in Ulster. Terrorists are far more likely to put their theory to the test if Governments and those who sustain them have a track record of conceding their demands, even when they are loud in their empty protestations and futile condemnations.

Terrorists ignore these condemnations or treat them with contempt, secure in the knowledge that their violence achieved, for example, the abolition of Stormont. The then Prime Minister explained that the step had been taken to end the violence. Terrorists know also that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would not have been signed had it not been for the "do something" mood which prevailed after the Brighton bombing. They have not missed the significance of the words of the Prime Minister at the signing ceremony:

"I entered into this agreement because I was not prepared to tolerate the situation of continuing violence."

The recent limited spate of letter bombs was nothing more than a reminder that another concession is overdue.

The second duty of a Member of Parliament is to a rather more limited segment of his constituents, and by that I mean those who serve in the forces in Northern Ireland. Hon. Members are entitled to remind us of the sacrifices of those men, who share the same dangers as their comrades in our indigenous security forces, but every Member has an obligation to ensure that risks are not incurred and sacrifices not made in vain.

The wives, mothers and fathers of soldiers sent to Northern Ireland would be incensed if they knew that the lives of their loved ones are daily put at risk through endless restrictions and instructions which, translated into practice, always allow terrorists to fire the first shot and make the first kill. I wonder whether relatives know that even opening fire in self-defence will be branded as a shoot-to-kill policy. If a soldier who is trained at great expense to shoot with success does just that in Northern Ireland, he is likely to end up in the dock after a protracted investigation by pen pushers behind a desk in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, but in any other theatre of war he would earn a medal.

We all have a duty to the members of security forces to put an end to the scandalous practice of allowing them to be used as targets, deprived of the freedom to hit hard against killers on the rampage. Those feelings were recently expressed to me by a young English officer who said: "I don't want to go back. We are exported to Northern Ireland and used as tethered goats." Those are horrifying words. I hope that, whatever views hon. Members may have, they will at least agree that those men deserve better.

As we meet here today, there is speculation about an event which is of secondary importance to the people of Northern Ireland: some kind of general election. The see-saws of opinion polls seem irrelevant to Ulster, where the only figures which count are the number of citizens who will be murdered by terrorists before the new Parliament meets.

The Secretary of State today has given no indicaton of the real determination of the Government who will be in charge of affairs in Northern Ireland and responsible for our protection even after the dissolution of Parliament. From then until the new Parliament meets, a dozen people may be murdered, just as 13 people have been murdered since I wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 March asking her, on humanitarian grounds, to review and recast the Government's political and security strategies and to indicate how much longer she is—to use her words at the signing of the agreement—

"prepared to tolerate the situation of continuing violence."

Any limited increase in personnel or resources resulting from consultations between the Secretary of State and the security chiefs will be valueless unless the Government demonstrate the will to win. The Government must cancel that fatal signal transmitted by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As long as that agreement is perceived by all sections of the community to be designed to lead to the embodiment of Northern Ireland in some form of an all-Ireland state, the terrorist organisations whose object that has always been will be encouraged to maintain and even redouble their efforts. We need concrete evidence that such a design has been set aside, before further lives are needlessly sacrificed.

5.53 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The Protestant population of Northern Ireland do not really count with this House. I decided to open my speech with that sentence after listening to the disgraceful, deplorable, despicable and downright insulting speech of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who said that the IRA's success had been nil. If he thinks that the people of Northern Ireland will listen to such insults from the Secretary of State in this House or elsewhere, he has another think coming. I invite him to come with me—not with 300 troops at his side, refusing to bring journalists with him, but taking a television crew to see his bold escapade on the road where the judge was murdered—to see the people who are suffering tonight. I would like to take him to the home in Pomeroy of the man whom he did not even have the decency to mention in his speech last Monday.

Mr. Tom King: Yes, I did.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Read *Hansard.*

I would like to take him to meet that man's wife and I would like him to tell her that the success of the IRA is nil. His speech will put a cold shiver up the spine of every Protestant. They will know that what I have been saying to them in the last months is true—that they will look in vain to the Government and the House for any defence or rescue from their appalling situation.

Hon. Members do not want to hear me say some things, but I will say them today. It is 18 months since I made a speech from this very place. We were told on that occasion by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) that this was the only road. Let us examine that road. The road is crimsoned and bloodied by the lives of our people. It has to mark it not milestones but tombstones. It is a road where the elementary pieces of democracy and democratic

principles have been trampled on and it is a road of confusion, confrontation, conflict and war. That is what has happened in the Province.

The hon. Member for Foyle said that this was the only road, but I say to the Government, "Don't try to push the majority any further down that road, for there is an end to the patience and tolerance of those who want to uphold the principles of democracy when those democratic principles are taken from them and they are told that they do not really apply to them."

Let us get a sense of realism into this debate. The Ministers at the Northern Ireland Office call in the media and tell them what the Unionists are thinking and what the Unionists really want. I speak in this House as a representative of the Unionists. I can claim that more than any other Member because I submitted myself to the whole of the people of Northern Ireland and got the largest vote ever recorded for any British politician. I know what those people are thinking. When I submitted myself to the electorate in the referendum by-election, I had the honour of achieving the largest vote of any Unionist who stood, so I can speak for the people who have voted for me and have given me a mandate to speak. Today I will speak for those people — an agonised, broken and bereaved people whose hearts and innermost souls are torn.

The Northern Ireland Office Ministers will say, "We have heard it all before. That is only Ian Paisley or Jim Molyneaux, the Unionists." I will tell the Secretary of State what a prominent clergyman has said. We heard about prominent clergymen from the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins). He did not tell us some of the other things said by prominent clergymen. I want to tell him what was said by a former moderator of the largest Protestant church in Northern Ireland, the Irish Presbyterian Church. According to a newspaper report of the funeral of Mr. Graham, the UDR man so savagely murdered in front of his wife and child by the IRA on his little farm at Pomeroy:

"Dr. Dickinson told mourners in the Tyrone village's Presbyterian church, including Mr. Graham's widow Yvonne, that the fact that many members of the congregation live in constant danger made the courage of men like Mr. Graham all the more impressive. 'It also makes the more odious the political conspiracy and moral bankruptcy of those who neither respect the blood of their brave sacrifices or the cries of their brokenhearted wives and children,' he said."

Let the Secretary of State and the House take heed of that. That was said not by a politician but by an honoured ex-moderator of the largest Protestant church in Northern Ireland. He also said:

"The Government at Westminster and their newfound friends in Dublin are as guilty of these crimes as those who actually do the deed."

What makes a minister speak such language? He does so because he knows exactly what is happening. If a leader of, say, the United Reformed Church, which is the nearest thing in this country to Presbyterianism, were to make such remarks at a funeral, what a furore there would be in the House. These remarks are made because ministers are moving among their congregations and know exactly what is happening.

Dr. Dickinson continued:

"And yet again it makes a nonsense of the call of Government Ministers for the support of the whole community for the security forces."

We have heard that today. What more can the Protestant community do to help the security forces? They supply the security forces with the vast majority of their recruits; they carry the coffins and bury their dead. The Secretary of State ought to know that.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), a member of the Government party who, although not a Unionist, probably has Unionist sympathies, was reported in the press today as saying that many RUC officers have a lack of confidence in Ministers and in their own Chief Constable. That too, is a fact, as anyone who moves about in Northern Ireland knows. Apparently hon. Members do not want to listen to the Unionist representatives — it is a disadvantage if one speaks for people through the ballot box — but perhaps they will listen to others who come and go in Northern Ireland and who know exactly what is happening.

The sad fact is that in Northern Ireland today the majority of the people, the Protestant population, have no faith in the Government. They do not trust them because they have found them out in deceptions over and over again. When the people find out that they have continually been deceived, they will turn and utterly reject the Government.

Mr. Dalyell: On the question of deception, has the hon. Gentleman any comment on what was widely reported in the British press about a forged bank account relating to himself? I am certain that it was not he who was responsible. Has he any comment on that worrying matter?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I shall comment on that later because it comes into what I intend to say.

We were told in the House by the Secretary of State even before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed that there would be great co-operation between the Garda and the RUC. I think that colleagues on these Benches thought that that was what the Anglo-Irish Agreement would deliver; they thought that at long last there would be a complete coming together of the security forces on both sides of the border, that the fight against terrorism would enter a new phase and that there would be a glimmer of light at the end of a long and terrible road.

I have a confidential document of 3 June 1986, and I shall tell the House how I know that it is authentic. The Chief Constable and his divisional commanders had a special meeting. The commander of N division reported:

"There are many on-the-run terrorists in county Donegal, but no real assistance from the Garda at all."

This was a divisional officer reporting to his commander, the man in whom the Secretary of State puts all his faith, Sir John Hermon. The assistant chief constable for rural W division said:

"There is a shortage of manpower in some divisions; a shortage of cameras is hindering work also. The Garda promised much but delivered little. Border reclosures after illegal reopenings are much too slow in being processed."

The document also says:

"In the north-west of the Province, on-the-run terrorists are training and there are explosives but the Garda is feeding nothing back at all. The Chief Constable stated that it was evident that their capcity and contribution was small."

We are told that there is a great link between the two forces and that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has settled this matter.

The first reaction of the authorities was to deny it — I had just sat down and written the document and it was not authentic, like some of the other documents we hear so much about. The RUC office of the Chief Constable

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issued a statement that the document was fabricated, that there was not any truth in it and that it was just a figment of my imagination. Then two senior police officers arrived at my house and said, "We have evidence that you have committed a crime. You have a document that you ought not to have." I said, "Let me bring the newspaper to you and read out what your office said about this document, that it is a fabrication." The police officers demanded the document. I gave them a copy, but I held on to the document.

If the Secretary of State does not already know this, he had better learn quickly that he cannot go on deceiving the people of Northern Ireland by issuing statements that are false and misrepresent the true position. All this has caught up with the Government. It is not healthy for hon. Members to say things like that. Pressures will be put on them. My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) said things about the Government. Why did they get at him? I find it repulsive for the Secretary of State to say today that the police will protect everybody. My hon. Friend said and did things that the Government did not like. The police went to his home and dismantled every bit of security in it. They even cut off the television system that enabled his wife to see who knocked on the door. Then they decided that he would no longer have any protection whatsoever, so they took it from him. They did that for three reasons: to embarrass him, to worry him, and to put an unbearable burden upon him.

The Achilles heel of any politician in Northern Ireland is his family. All of us in Northern Ireland worry about our families, no matter on what side of the House we sit. We do not worry about ourselves, we know what we can expect. It would be easier for certain undercover officers of MI5 to wipe out my hon. Friend when he had no police protection. I shall come to one or two conclusions.

Mr. Tom King: Leaving aside the total fabrication at the end of the hon. Member's remarks, there is not a word of truth in the serious allegation that he has chosen to make. I hope that he will accept from me that at no time have I made any comment about seeking to remove personal protection from any hon. Member or any other person who is in need of personal protection. The hon. Gentleman has made a serious allegation. There is not a word of truth in it. I hope that he will have the decency to withdraw it.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is all right for the Secretary of State to stand at the Dispatch Box and pass the buck. He is responsible. My evidence is that his deputy, the Minister of State, who is sitting beside him, was involved in this matter.

If the Secretary of State wants to take me down this road, let me go a bit further. Do not let him tell me that Secretaries of State do not deal with the private security of individual hon. Members. I sat with a previous Secretary of State who made a decision concerning the security of a past leader of the Unionist party, Mr. Harry West, a former hon. Member. Let the right hon. Gentleman not say to the House today, by washing his hands in a Pilate-like fashion, that he has nothing to do with it. He has a responsibility to see that an hon. Member is protected. When his security is taken away, that hon. Member is entitled to know why. He does not know why even today.

Mr. King: The hon. Member does not improve the standing that he has in the House by making a totally untrue allegation and by refusing to accept my absolute assertion—obviously, I am concerned about my good name in the House—that at no stage did I make any comment about or proposal for the withdrawal of protection for the hon. Member. He does not improve his position by seeking then to transfer the allegation to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, about whom it is equally untrue. Of course, a Secretary of State, if matters came to him, would be concerned to ensure that hon. Members had proper protection, but the charge that he made, which he is now trying to dodge—he is not withdrawing—is that I sought the withdrawal of protection from his hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). I tell the hon. Member categorically that his allegation is quite untrue. I hope that he will have the decency to withdraw it.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Secretary of State should read *Hansard* tomorrow to see exactly what I said. I repeat that it is dangerous—*[Interruption.]* I do not care whether hon. Members are nittering. We in Northern Ireland walk a tightrope every day. We are not afraid of a few hecklers; we might be in our coffins tomorrow. We are not worried about that. We have made our decision on the matter. I have made a statement to the House. I am not dodging. I never dodge any statement. The Secretary of State knows that I stand by what I say in the House.

I shall go further. What about the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. W. McCrea)? Do hon. Members think that, after an IRA man has broken into his house, it is an appropriate time to withdraw security from him? Do hon. Members really think that it is appropriate for police to say to an hon. Member, who had a majority of only 70 over the Sinn Fein candidate, and who was a likely target for the IRA to shoot, "You will not get into a police car. You will walk the road from the place where you parked your car, almost a mile, to your home" when renovations were being done to his home for security purposes? The Secretary of State cannot get away from that responsibility. He can say what he likes about it.

Rev. William McCrea: Will my hon. Friend tell the House why it happened only to two Members of the Democratic Unionist party that immediate steps were taken to remove their security and that it was said that it would take two minutes to tell them that they were on their own, facing the IRA conspiracy throughout our constituencies?

Rev. Ian Paisley: All I can say is that truth will out. I made statements in the House some years ago. They were challenged by a Labour Front-Bench spokesman at the time. Hon. Members can read *Hansard*. The truth is now coming out. The Government and other Governments will be faced with their responsibilities. They are the risks that hon. Members have to take and are taking.

I find it strange that the secretariat at Maryfield has police escorts when hon. Members who are on the danger line are refused them. Is it not time that the Secretary of State investigated why that has happened and at least give us an answer? Why are members of the Civil Service in Dublin given police escorts when hon. Members whose lives are threatened and who have always had protection have had their protection removed or partly removed? The Secretary of State must face up to that and give hon.

Members an answer. I repeat that it makes it a lot easier for certain people to commit murder when an hon. Member is not under protection.

It has been said to me that if I do not do what the authorities want me to do, and if I do not please the police authorities, they will take security from me. They can take it. I told them that. They can take the whole lot; they are welcome to take it. They do not think that I should have protection. I never asked for it, it was given to me, and if they want to take it away, they can. None of us is pleading for this. We are exposing the hypocrisy of the whole business.

I find it amazing that a former Secretary of State should tell us that the southern Government had no intention of taking over our territory. The other day, speaking in Washington, Brian Lenihan—he is co-chairman with the Secretary of State of the new condominium, to which the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) referred—said:

"In the last analysis, there is no real solution to the Northern Ireland problem except in an all-Ireland context."

Unity was the sole aim of the Dublin deal. The right hon. Gentleman said that he did not understand the language, but that he was learning to translate; let him translate that.

Mr. Haughey, when he was opening the forum that the hon. Member for Foyle was involved in getting under way, said that the new Ireland could be achieved only by agreement and consent. That is very interesting. He made it clear, however, that Unionists would not be allowed to dissent.

We who come from Ulster know exactly what Republicanism is, but the House is ignorant of Irish Republicanism.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): It would have been very helpful if those pearls of wisdom had been dropped to us on a regular basis over the past 18 months. In the event of the hon. Gentleman's re-election, will he give an undertaking that he will bring his troops here on a regular basis to discuss the question of the Province, and of the kingdom as a whole?

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is very easy to say that. But if the hon. Gentleman's constituents were being murdered, as mine are—if he were following coffin after coffin, and if he had to lay his hand on the curly heads of children who will never have their father back — he might think differently if the House overwhelmingly rejected the views of Ulster Unionists on the agreement.

I have come to the House since I was elected. I have been as regular an attender as any hon. Member, and have taken part in all the debates on security. This is not the first time that I have spoken on the subject. I worked the Stormont Assembly. Some of my Unionist friends did not work it so hard, but I did. Even the Secretary of State could not deny that. I took part in the process, and what did I find? I found that our people — the Unionist majority — were thrown to one side, and behind their backs this condominium was spawned. Over us are now set the very men who spawned the Provisional IRA.

The Secretary of State should read the *Hansard* of the Dail. He should read what Neil Blaney said about Charlie Haughey and his cohorts. He admitted that they were in on the day that the Provisional IRA was spawned. Now my people and I are being asked to be ruled by an Anglo-Irish conference. The Secretary of State shakes his head, but I tell the House that the Police Order flows from that Anglo-Irish conference, as does that on public order.

How do I know that?—because we have been told over and over again that it is part of the process. We are moving in that direction, as have the Dublin authorities. We have enough sense to know that that is true, and it is no use the Secretary of State denying it.

What do people do when the Secretary of State and his hon. Friend the Minister say that they know the result of elections, and they tell us nothing? What do they do when they petition Her Majesty and it is dismissed as a useless exercise? What do they do when they ask for a reasonable way forward?

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne, who has now left the Chamber, asked whether we could put aside the question. It can be put aside when the Anglo-Irish Agreement is put aside. Let that be set aside; let Maryfield be closed. The police have enough to do without escorting around civil servants from Dublin. Let the Secretary of State call a round table conference of the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland to find a replacement for this obnoxious agreement. That is the only way forward. If the Secretary of State is not prepared to do that, we shall have a very serious confrontation.

The people of Northern Ireland are in a sad and sorry state. There is a sense of depression abroad in the Province; a sense of frustration; a sense of doom and gloom. That percolates into the funerals, many of which I have attended. I see a different mood in Northern Ireland today from the mood that I saw five or six years ago. People are saying that the democratic process does not work, and that all their voting is not heeded. Anywhere else, the majority would be consulted. It should be remembered that we were not even consulted about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I said in the House that I hoped that the House would ensure that fair play was given to those who used democratic principles, but fair play has not been given.

In the Ulster hall on 10 November last year, 2,000 well-heeled men met from across the Province. They came to the conclusion that the Government and the House had not the will to win the war, and that they would sell us down the river. I must tell the House today, whether the House likes to hear it or not, that I have come to the same conclusion, and I believe it more strongly after listening to the Secretary of State's speech today. If the right hon. Gentleman pushes us on down that crimson road, marked with tombstones instead of milestones and littered with democratic principles that should have been upheld, he will find that the Ulster people will not stand for it. There will be resistance unto the death.

If those are the only words that I ever have to speak again in the House, I will have delivered my soul of what the ordinary people of Northern Ireland are saying and thinking tonight. It is not a pleasant thing to say, but it has to be said. I trust that perhaps at this late hour the Government will have second thoughts, and that, instead of choosing confrontation, they will go for consultation and set aside this so-called accord. I hope that they will let us get round the table to try to find a way forward in the proper democratic manner rather than rejecting the largest section of the community and saying that those people will have no say in their future.

6.27 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): One of the problems in speaking about security in the North of Ireland is that there is always the temptation to become very emotional. I shall try to resist that temptation, because emotionalism can become mawkish and, indeed, embarrassing when indulged in to that extent. I shall try to avoid detailed assessments of security, because, as a lay person, I am not competent to make them. However, I should like briefly to examine five of what I believe to be misconceptions about the security position, and to ask whether we can ever solve the problem, in the short or the long term, unless we get rid of those misconceptions.

The first misconception is that there is a security solution to the problem per se. I do not believe that there is any absolute security solution. If we do believe it, it poses certain questions. First, why has that solution not been found during the past 16 years? If it exists, it should have been found in that time. If it has not, we must come to certain conclusions, the first being that every Secretary of State since 1972 has been derelict in his duty; the second being that every GOC commanding troops in the North of Ireland has been incompetent; the third being that every chief constable of the police in the North of Ireland has been unable to make the proper decisions; and the fourth being that the House has not provided the proper legislation.

Those are the components that are singly, variably, and collectively necessary if we are to propose the theory that there is a solution based simply and solely on security. I do not believe that one can answer yes to any of those questions. Furthermore, there has been no dereliction of duty by any Secretary of State, or GOC, or RUC Chief Constable, or the House. However, the nature of the problem does not lend itself to a security solution. Security is part of the solution, but it cannot solve the problem.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In so far as there may be dereliction of duty, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was a dereliction of duty for elected representatives deliberately to have abstained from coming to this House when important matters were discussed over and over again?

Mr. Mallon: I shall leave hon. Members to draw their own conclusions about that.

The theory that there is a security solution to this problem must be put into its proper context. What has been the context of the last 16 years? There has been a very heavily armed Army presence throughout Northern Ireland — the biggest outside the NATO forces in Europe. There has also been a preponderance of Army bases, lookout posts and fortifications. In my constituency alone there is one for every 1,000 people. The SAS, MI5 and MI6 have also been used in Northern Ireland. A very much expanded police force has been backed up by a police reserve that is also expanding, and it is costing £1 million a day to service. Furthermore, there is the Ulster Defence Regiment. Does anybody seriously suggest that the resources to deal with the security problem have not been provided?

Against that background and in that context, it would be a great mistake to suggest that the Northern Ireland Office, the Army, the Royal Ulster Constabulary or this House has failed. The failure has been not properly to identify a political problem or to seek a political solution to it. We should not confuse a security solution with what is essentially a political problem.

Another misconception is that if one makes the law harsher and more punitive, the result will be to put an end to violence and to the commitment of violence. Put in context, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 is a substantial derogation from the normal practice throughout western Europe. There is also the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. Courts decided cases without juries. Supergrass trials have been held. Interrogation techniques, at the request of this House, were examined by Lord Justice Bennett and condemned by him. There has been internment without trial. Certain areas have also been saturated, the main example being a curfew in the Falls road many years ago. When one examines the problem in that context, the legislation is there to deal with it. Indeed, it is much too harsh. One does not cure a commitment to violence by introducing more punitive legal remedies.

I listened very carefully to the Secretary of State's speech and to the words that he used. He should not tamper with the present laws or with the present court arrangements. Furthermore, he should not be tempted to tamper with the remission of sentences.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mallon: I noted what the Secretary of State said, and I am concerned about what he said. I hope that he does not go down that road.

Mr. Maginnis: Is the hon. Gentleman saying to the Secretary of State, "Be sure that you do not do anything about the legal process in Northern Ireland that would lead to the conviction of 142 out of the 156 unsolved murders in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, because it would not be in the interests of the SDLP that that should happen"?

Mr. Mallon: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has cheapened the discussion that way.

Mr. Maginnis: Answer.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman knows what was said during the protracted discussions in the Standing Committee on the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act. He should not interpret my remarks in that way. To do so is to cheapen a very serious point.

We must have learnt some lessons in the last 16 years. One lesson is that those who are involved in paramilitary activities and who have committed themselves to violence can live with repression. They will also try to promote repression because it is their biggest single propaganda weapon. They cannot do without it, because they cannot live without that type of repression. In both propaganda and political terms, repression is their lifeblood. It would be a tragic mistake to provide them with that lifeblood.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): The hon. Gentleman says that punitive measures would encourage the IRA and ensure that it continued its battle, but its success depends to a great extent on the support that it receives in the border area and in many other areas. If that support were not forthcoming, many of the measures to which the hon. Gentleman has referred would be unnecessary. If, wholeheartedly, unequivocally and

without any qualification, people gave their support to the RUC and the Army, they could deal with the terrorists, isolate them and put them in prison.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am suggesting that the IRA and the other paramilitary groupings, which are more numerous than the IRA, need repression. There are certain things that they cannot live with. They cannot live with justice. When they have to live with justice, their own basic injustice is shown up very clearly. They cannot live with equality. When they have to live with equality, their attempts to make other people unequal are shown up very clearly. Above all, they cannot live with the concept of reconciliation. That is their greatest single enemy. The Provisional IRA, the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force fear reconciliation most of all, because it goes to the root of their support in the community. Reconciliation tackles their theories about political development, and ultimately reconciliation will defeat them.

A security solution cannot be pursued absolutely and exclusively. To use what has become a glossary of terms in Northern Ireland, we can root out the terrorist. That phrase is used very glibly. We should try to find out exactly what it means. To root out the terrorist means to dispense with the proper regulations and the law and to lean on one section of the community, whichever section it may be in which paramilitary groupings are to be found.

Others would give the security forces a free hand. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) appeared to hint at that when he said that those in the Army felt like tethered goats. Translated, that means that we should dispense with the proper process of justice and involve ourselves in that which is outside the law, even to the extent of summary execution.

Again, some will say that we should strengthen legislation. Properly translated in Northern Ireland terms, that means that one either bends the law to get results, or acts outside it. Surely, given the long period for which we have been dealing with the problem, we know how counter-productive that can be.

If we—and by "we", I mean everyone in the North of Ireland, in the Republic and here—wish to see a solution to this problem that will bring peace, a peace that will bring stability and a peace and stability that will last, the last thing that we must do is start to play the terrorist game. We should never try to play by the law of the jungle. If we do that we shall destroy our chance of achieving the only real solution, which is a political solution. We shall destroy confidence and respect for law and the process of law in Northern Ireland. I have no doubt that if we do that we shall create circumstances in which repartition is almost inevitable.

Mr. Molyneaux: I am grateful for the opportunity to explain what I meant, and I think that the hon. Gentleman knows what I meant. I was not suggesting that the law should be bent to allow soldiers and policemen to go on the rampage. I was simply saying that they should be put on at least an equal footing with terrorists under the law. They should not be required by yellow cards or by any other device to wait until at least one them has been shot dead before they can act in self-defence.

Mr. Mallon: Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that there should be no regulations and no yellow card—ineffective though it is ? Is he saying that the security forces should not be constrained by the strict regulations that ought to apply to every person who is legally carrying arms?

Mr. Molyneaux: I am talking about restrictions imposed in the form of cautionary briefings. When soldiers—this applies to the RUC, too—go out on a task they are told, "Do your job. Go through the motions. But for God's sake don't be successful, or you will find yourself before a police inquiry."

Mr. Mallon: I do not want to prolong this duologue, but is the right hon. Gentleman saying that when a soldier goes out on a task he should be given carte blanche to do what he likes and to use his weapon in any way he likes? As I see it, that is the only explanation of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. But if he has a clearer explanation, I shall give way again.

Mr. Molyneaux: I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do indeed have a clearer explanation. Time and again we have seen examples. When successful action has been taken by the Army against terrorists caught in the very act of terrorism — when the Army has acted effectively — soldiers have been brought back to Northern Ireland, after the Director of Public Prosecutions has tossed the papers around for a considerable time, and branded as common criminals. That is not British justice.

Mr. Mallon: I think that we have succeeded only in adding another weasel word to the list: "acting effectively" is shorthand for killing someone.

Another popular misconception that we should examine is that held by those who say that if only the people of Northern Ireland had control or charge of security the problem would come to an end. That is complete and utter nonsense. We saw what happened before 1972. Indeed, the people of Northern Ireland were in charge of security until March of that year, by which time 167 people were dead. I am loth to draw any conclusions from that statistic, but it must tell us something. The argument that the problem would be solved if the people in Northern Ireland were in charge of security is based on a faulty premise—and, I believe, a very dangerous premise indeed.

Almost as dangerous is the misconception that devolution would somehow end the violence in Northern Ireland; it would not. Indeed, it would add to the violence for a time, because devolution could be achieved only by reconciliation and those who are most afraid of reconciliation would attack it, as they have in the past, to ensure that devolution on a partnership basis simply could not work.

That brings us to the crunch for all of us, and particularly for the British Government. In those circumstances, would a British Government do what they did in 1974 and renege on a properly constituted Administration in the North of Ireland? Would they run away from the problem or would they see it through? We have had a bitter experience in the past. Some pontificate to us, implying that if only we would agree to devolution, we could start to solve the problem.

Irrespective of our political persuasions, we should all expect an answer to the question: if devolution comes and there are problems of violence and security, will the Government here renege as they did before, or will they

[Mr. Mallon]

have the courage to stand up and do what is right? That question can be answered only on the Floor of the House. That question should be addressed, too, to the political parties in the North of Ireland, because it poses a further question. Have we the will and the nerve to embark on a process of reconciliation and to see it through?

That is the challenge for us, the people of Northern Ireland. That challenge exists for both communities—Nationalist and Unionist, Catholic and Protestant, call them what you will. Will they embark on the long hard road to peace? Only by taking that long hard road will we find peace or an answer to the security problems. Will they work together for a new future, or will they stagnate, as they are doing now, in the bloody past? Those are the challenges. Every one of us here has to face that problem. There are no easy answers to those questions, but we shall not answer them unless we face up to them.

Another misconception is that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was a fiendish plot, hatched behind people's backs, to wean Unionists away from the Union with Britain. It is implied, too, that the SDLP—the party to which I am proud to belong, and which has two members present out of this great grouping—somehow hijacked two Governments and made them sign the agreement, perhaps against their will. I thank all concerned for the compliment and for the confidence that has been placed in us, but I assure them that it is not true.

It is time that the House faced up to the fact that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed not because the British Government have any great love for the Irish Government or for the nationalist community in the North of Ireland. Pragmatism lies at the root of almost everything that is done in politics. There is little generosity in politics. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed by two sovereign Governments because they were concerned about their own interests, which demanded that they take the only course whereby a solution to the problem could be found.

It is not just a Northern Ireland problem but an all-Ireland problem, and it is not just an Irish problem but one with British connotations. It was therefore logical that a solution should be based on agreements between two sovereign Governments because the problem affects both of them. The two Governments belatedly realised that if they were to solve the problem in political and security terms and eventually in socio-economic terms, they had to approach it in that way. That is why the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, and it is a very good reason because it is the only way in which a lasting solution can be found. If we are to deal honestly with the political concepts and with the concepts of security, we must get rid of the nonsense and misconceptions and look the problems straight in the face.

A final misconception goes to the root of the Irish problem. It has a historical dimension and it is still with us today. I refer to the fallacy that violence can ever solve anything in Ireland. In 1933, Eamon de Valera said:

> "There is no use in pretending we can solve it with mere words; we can not; nor can we ever solve it by force."

That was the realisation of a man who had engaged in force — a man who became Prime Minister and eventually President of the Republic of Ireland — and one who had the courage to say so. I ask the present Government and future Governments to reciprocate and to commit themselves to the view that the problem cannot be solved by repression or by force, by strengthening repressive legislation or by increasing the police or the Army. It will be solved only when we win the battle for the hearts and minds of the people in a political way.

6.52 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): This debate arises partly from the request of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and his colleagues and partly, I suspect, from the killing of Lord Justice Gibson. I regret his death very much indeed, although on the basis of the evidence to hand it may be that by his own carelessness the judge was almost an accessory to his own death. Be that as it may, it is extraordinary that the death of one distinguished judge should have played such a large part in bringing about this debate when the deaths of scores of Northern Ireland police officers have not brought about a debate.

I find the timing of the debate ironic. Today and tomorrow are the very days when a judicial review is taking place in Northern Ireland to see whether the Chief Constable is entitled to gag the chairman of the Police Federation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was good enough, rightly, to pay tribute to the men and women of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and he knows, as the House knows, the great importance of maintaining their morale, yet very few things have done so much damage to their morale as the attempt by the Chief Constable to gag the chairman of the statutory body set up by this House to represent the views of the men and women of the force.

The timing is odd for another reason. Following this debate, the only legislative action to be taken by the House today in respect of Northern Ireland will be a police order —I hope to speak in that debate in due course—part of which is designed to place on the men and women of the RUC discriminatory discipline arrangements which the House threw out when they were proposed for police forces in England and Wales.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will understand that, although I and, I am sure, all members of the RUC are grateful to Ministers for their assurances and words of confidence and support, it is by their actions that Ministers will be judged by the men and women who die on our behalf. It is the actions which have led Ministers in no way to seek to prevent the gagging of the chairman of the Police Federation and their actions tonight in discriminating against the RUC on discipline, that Ministers will be judged, not by all their fine words.

Mr. Maginnis: I did not interrupt the hon. Gentleman earlier as he was making an important point with which I entirely agree, but I believe that he will have annoyed a great number of people in suggesting that the deaths of Lord Justice Gibson and Lady Gibson were due to carelessness on the part of Lord Justice Gibson. I must stoutly defend Lord Justice Gibson. He had police protection and he would have been told time and again that the level of co-operation at the frontier made it a safer area now than it was 18 months ago, although many of us know that that is not true. It is absolutely wrong to suggest that the learned judge, who had served Ulster well, was a primary contributor to his own death and that of his wife. Many people will resent that suggestion.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I think that the House will prefer to leave the investigation to arrive at its own conclusion. I expressed an opinion based on the evidence that we have so far, but the evidence is incomplete and partial.

With regard to the substance of the debate, any English Member must feel very humble in saying anything about the security situation in Northern Ireland in the presence of colleagues in the House who, with their families, live with that situation daily. My remarks will therefore be directed to the only subject in Northern Ireland on which I can claim perhaps some small knowledge — the position of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. It must be said plainly from this House that the present security policies in Northern Ireland are not working, or at least not working effectively enough. They do not give protection to the citizens of our own country there. The Queen's peace is not being upheld.

The security policies that we have pursued rest on two main planks. One, I suppose, is the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the belief that it would lead to better co-operation between the two sides of the border. I supported that agreement. I continue to do so. But so far, the Irish Republic has not delivered its part of the bargain.

The second arm of our security policy is Ulsterisation —the belief that the Army could reduce its profile and that the primacy of the police, which I support, would be sufficient for the threat to security to be contained. I do not believe that the policy of Ulsterisation has worked.

Against this background of the failure of the Irish Republic to deliver the goods and the failure of Ulsterisation, the Royal Ulster Constabulary is placed in an all but impossible professional position. It is being asked and required to undertake not one job but four.

The first task of the RUC is ordinary policing. There is nothing unique about Northern Ireland; it has its share of crime, traffic problems and burglary, although perhaps a little less than many of our communities. Nevertheless, the RUC is faced with the basic task of policing, which should be its primary concern.

The second task that the RUC has been asked to undertake over the past year or so is to contain massive threats to public order. I do not want to go into the background of those threats, but I know from some personal observation that scenes not far removed from those that we saw during the miners' strike in this country have had to be faced by the RUC in Northern Ireland. During those threats to the Queen's peace, its members were placed in some terrible professional and personal dilemmas. For example, it is no good talking about policing by consent or community policing when the police do not have the consent of the majority community, as happened at particular times and places. Policemen also confronted some terrible personal dilemmas, including the fact that their homes were firebombed.

One of the greatest achievements of the RUC is that it has come through that period, with all its terrible personal and professional dilemmas, with the greatest credit. Its officers behaved, without leaning to the majority or minority constituencies, as truly professional British policemen, and I am proud of them; but let it never be forgotten that the continuing massive threat to public order strains the RUC's resources.

The third task that the RUC is asked to undertake is unlike that of any other British police force—to fight Europe's most difficult and prolonged counter-insurgency war. It is not in the Basque region of Spain or in Greece that the casualties of terrorism are at their highest; it is in the United Kingdom. The RUC is overstretched in dealing with that insurgency. The time has come for us to lighten its load.

The fourth task that the RUC uniquely is being required to perform is to guard an international frontier. In the tangled history of Northern Ireland, the RUC, to some extent, came into being as an armed force precisely because there was a frontier to guard. But the time has come when the RUC should not be expected to maintain the frontier between two countries. That function should rest primarily with the Army. One reason for that is that the RUC, when engaged in frontier duties, is confined to virtual fortresses, festooned with wire, from which it is often difficult for the police to move to and fro. They are prevented from doing their ordinary policing duties such as serving warrants and preventing crime. So in many of the border posts the RUC is not being used efficiently. Therefore, the time has come to raise the profile of the Army and to expect it to take on the primary task of policing the frontier. This would release some of the resources of the RUC to engage in counter-insurgency and its many other policing duties.

I turn from this analysis of the excessive load on the RUC to one or two suggestions about what we need to do about it.

First, as I said, we must lighten the load. In the first instance, that should be done by requiring the Army to take over primary responsibility for the border. Secondly, the RUC and its reserve need more resources and better equipment. I was glad to hear what the Secretary of State had to say, although he was pretty vague, about improving the manpower of the RUC. I hope that we will see more well-trained men in uniform on the streets before very long.

I have the benefit of the advice of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland, which has given a lot of thought to the issue of security. On 24 April 1987, it made a number of suggestions. To my surprise, this morning I discovered from the Minister of State that the Northern Ireland Office had no knowledge of these proposals. That would be par for the course since rarely is the Police Federation consulted by the Northern Ireland Office on anything except officials' own proposals.

The federation suggests a number of matters in the operational policing sector, one or two in the legal sector and one that deals with policy. As to operations, the federation suggests, first, that there needs to be

"a complete review of the role of the Divisional Mobile Support Units."

I do not think that I need to develop that point because I think that the hon. Members who represent Ulster constituencies understand perfectly well what I mean. There is unease about the way in which the divisional mobile support units are deployed.

Secondly, the federation points out the difficulties that are experienced, particularly in the south Armagh area, with regard to helicopter flying hours. Imagine that—difficulties in Northern Ireland about the number of hours that helicopters may be flown! The federation proposes that the RUC should be authorised to purchase its own helicopters. I believe that that is right. I do not think that the police should have to depend on whether Army helicopters are available. The Metropolitan police has helicopters here; the RUC should have helicopters in Northern Ireland.

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

The next proposal of the federation also relates to the operations. It says:

"In view of the technology available to terrorist groups, members of the police service should be provided with their own ECM equipment"—

that is, electronic counter-measures. It is essential that the police have available the means of detecting some of the advanced mines and other dreadful devices that the IRA have available.

The federation goes on to say:

"In an effort to improve the security of personnel on and off duty,"

there should be an immediate issue of concealed body armour. I believe that this CBA should be made available to all ranks of the RUC. There has been a good deal of testing of this by the Metropolitan police and many forces in the United States. It can and does save lives, and it is high time that it was made available to officers of the RUC.

I now want to consider the federation's proposals in the legal area. They say the Secretary of State should now consider removing the right of silence under our anti-terrorist legislation. That matter was debated widely during the passage of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and numerous other Acts. I now make this point to the Secretary of State as a straight proposal from the federation. I have not finally made up my mind about it; however, I certainly believe that it should be considered.

The federation also believes, as many hon. Members believe, that the prosecution should be allowed to appeal against excessively lenient sentences. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be aware that this matter, too, is being considered in another place. It has been debated here, too, and the Home Secretary has by no means closed his mind to further action along those lines. However, within the particular circumstances in Northern Ireland, perhaps my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should run a little faster than Home Office Ministers.

Of the 14 proposals made by the federation, I want to refer to a difficult point, the belief of some federation members—not all—that the time has come for selective internment. I am well aware of the many objections to selective internment. We have had it before. There is the risk that it could alienate many people in the nationalist community. However, it cannot be doubted that men are now walking the streets of Belfast and Dublin who have killed, who will kill again, and who have been released. The police know that and the community knows it. There must be a better way of preventing some of those evil men from being prematurely released to kill again.

In addition to providing resources and lightening the RUC's load, it is vital to underpin the morale of the RUC. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was not in the Chamber when I made one or two observations on that point. However, I am sure that he will be good enough to read *Hansard*. The men and women of the RUC who have suffered so many casualties, who take so many risks and who have received so many compliments badly need very much more sensitive leadership and a better dialogue with the Northern Ireland Office and Ministers.

My instinct throughout my political life has always been to back the man on the job, particularly when we can hear the sound of gunfire. I want to say nothing today that would undermine the position of the Chief Constable. However, I believe that a time comes in the career of all senior police officers when perhaps that officer should contemplate retirement. There has been a series of actions within the force — arbitrary transfers, a refusal to employ women in the RUC reserve which led to vast expenditures of public money on abortive legal actions, the attempted gagging of Mr. Wright, squabbles with the previous commissioner in the Irish Republic, Mr. Wren —all of which add up to a worrying position.

Together with the Secretary of State, I pay tribute to the courage and leadership of Sir John Hermon. I wish him well in his job. However, following the next election there will be a time for new men and new measures. I hope that the Secretary of State, if he remains in his office, will not shrink from taking what may be for him a difficult decision.

I end with a request. We badly need an improved dialogue between the police — particularly the Police Federation—and the Northern Ireland Office. We shall have an opportunity later to debate the draft police order which, in my view, is an absolute model of how not to conduct a dialogue between a statutory body and the Northern Ireland Office.

Over the many years—the House may feel too many years—during which I have been associated with the police forces of this country, I have had the pleasure of dealing with nine Home Secretaries, from both the Labour and Conservative parties. I have been able to agree with some of them on police matters and I have disagreed with others. However, there has always been an opportunity for the statutory body set up by the House to enter discussions and achieve occasional changes to proposed legislation in the common interest. By contrast, during my negotiations over the past two or three years on virtually every subject that concerned the Police Federation with the Northern Ireland Office, there has been no give whatsoever. The Northern Ireland Office has always known best. However,

"By their fruits ye shall know them".

The evidence on the ground does not suggest to me that the Northern Ireland Office always knows best about policing and security. It would be wise to be more attentive and more conceding to the views of the Police Federation. That is the way to underpin the morale of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State quite rightly described as the best counter-terrorist police force in the world.

7.15 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): Right hon. and hon. Members should be aware that at the present time in Northern Ireland there is a great state of crisis. We have a daily round of death and destruction. It is a matter of the gravest concern that the IRA has been able to carry out its current murder campaign as easily as it has. However, the long-suffering people of the Province, although they are completely disillusioned, will not panic. They have endured such campaigns of terror for the past 15 years, 15 years of inefficient colonial rule. During that time, they have suffered about 2,500 deaths and another 29,000 injured in the process.

If such diabolical acts were carried out in any other part of the United Kingdom, the population would rise against the Government. However, over in Northern Ireland there is a belief that we are now considered to be second-class citizens. Nevertheless, those second-class citizens have the right to object to the continuing campaign of foul murder being perpetrated against them. They have earned that right through their sacrifice in the defence of their country

which has now apparently deserted them. They — the ordinary people of Northern Ireland — no longer have any faith in repeated pledges from those in authority to tackle terrorism. Too often in the past those pledges have turned out to be empty gestures.

Those people interpret the platitudes from our Northern Ireland Ministers as expounding the need to shore up a tottering Anglo-Irish Agreement by attempting to portray that iniquitous imposition on them as contributing positively towards the creation of a near-normal situation in the Province. The people of Northern Ireland know that such normality does not exist.

I am here today to tell this House that the hypocritical statements that we have endured over the past week only further demonstrate the fundamental weakness in the present security policy — the absence of the political commitment required to defeat terrorism. The vast majority of the people in the Province are now convinced that the absence of any form of dedication permits what is now known as an acceptable level of violence. There now appears to be a policy of holding the ring in the hope that by some miracle the IRA will be encouraged to lay down its arms and fade into oblivion.

That optimism is not shared by the people who are holding the ring. They know that the IRA is a political terrorist group that seeks to have Northern Ireland expelled from the United Kingdom, against the wishes of the vast majority of its citizens. Its ability to wage war against the security forces and civilians in Northern Ireland and to recruit volunteers depends on the relative progress that is made towards the goal of a united Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Agreement and the diminution of British sovereignty that is implicit within it is clearly seen by the terrorists as proof of their ability to wring concessions from the Government towards that end. While they can do that, they will continue with their campaign with renewed vigour, and with new recruits.

Not until the political will is found to govern Northern Ireland as any other region of the United Kingdom, with the same rights and privileges, will the IRA cease to believe in its ability to achieve the ultimate victory over the citizens of Northern Ireland, and the British Government. In the meantime, responsibility for the appalling security must be laid at the door of our Secretary of State, who has failed in his duty to ensure that citizens are protected from the actions of terrorism.

It is sickening to listen to the sanctimonious utterings of Ministers, vainly trying to support a security policy that the IRA can appear to destroy with impunity. The Ulster people see evidence every day in the attacks by the IRA that there has been no improvement whatsoever in security in the Province. We were told that everything was being done to deny the IRA safe havens in the Republic. However, that is clearly not the case. The IRA does not kill Gardai officers, and the Gardai consequently have no great personal interest in security. It is not their friends, relatives or neighbours who are killed or maimed.

We hear again about more proposals to establish special groups to improve security co-operation, when we were told over a year ago that security was excellent. We are now to have more working committees and a so-called task force. However, in the light of experience, I am sure that I shall be forgiven if I say that such meetings between the Secretary of State and his advisers on this are seen in Northern Ireland to be only cosmetic exercises. It is a sad reflection on that that the community has lost confidence in promises of meaningful security measures. It is also sad that that impinges on those responsible for their formulation. Is it any wonder that people are now saying, "What do you expect when our Secretary of State is not accountable for what happens in Northern Ireland?" Unlike his colleagues in Scotland and Wales he does not come to the region where he exercises supreme power. His competence, or the lack of it, is unlikely to win or lose him any votes in the next election.

It is time for a reappraisal and, more importantly, for a complete commitment by the Government to defeat terrorism. Our police force is ready to make sacrifices, but a complete Ulsterisation policy which leaves primary responsibility for security with the RUC, is to be condemned. Ulsterisation has meant that people living in border areas have been asked to defend themselves. It has left part-time UDR and RUC personnel as soft targets as they go about their daily civilian tasks. It has certainly not weaned nationalist support away from the IRA. The anti-terrorist role that is carried out by the RUC is completely inappropriate to it. Only the fully trained and equipped British Army—our Army—can be expected properly to counter terrorism, especially on the border.

The existence of the Anglo-Irish Conference, enshrining as it does the Republic's refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the British Army in Northern Ireland, is a major obstacle to the full deployment of our Army in that role. That was evidenced earlier this week when the Republic's Defence Minister, Mr. Michael Noonan, while on a publicity tour on the frontier, deliberately snubbed a British Army officer in charge of his patrol. He said that there were certain procedures to go through before there could be informalities on both sides.

It is time to grasp the nettle and time that the Government realised that this shabby Dublin deal cannot possibly bring peace, order and good government to Northern Ireland. It should now be put aside as a costly experiment, which has not, and never will, work. Meaningful dialogue can then be entered into to put forward acceptable alternatives for the benefit of all the long-suffering people of the Province.

7.25 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak in this House, bearing in mind that my constituents continue to grieve because of the continuing murders performed by the murderous hands of the IRA. At the commencement of my remarks, I should say that I am somewhat disappointed that the British public do not have the privilege of seeing this House televised because this is an important and major debate, especially when one considers the number of murders in Northern Ireland—a part of Her Majesty's domain. I have counted the hon. Members on the Government Benches, and they mustered 17 at the height of their presence. The Labour party could muster five——

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): What a cheek. The hon. Gentleman is never here.

Rev. William McCrea: If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene, I shall certainly be glad to give way.

The alliance has been able to muster only one spokesman for the occasion. Yet hon. Members lecture us and tell us how much we are listened to in this House and

[Rev. William McCrea]

how often we should come. — *[Interruption]*. It is interesting to hear so many protests coming from Labour Members. I suppose that the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) is getting in his speech before a general election may remove him and would like to continue to speak for as long as possible.

However, I found it most telling to hear a conversation in a Corridor outside the Chamber. Two hon. Members were in discussion and were laughing together about why the House was so sparsely attended today. They said that there was "a difficult decision of priorities". They had to decide between Rolls-Royce shares and attending this debate. I quote those remarks made by two hon. Members in a Corridor of this House today because it typifies what many of my colleagues feel, that there is little interest among hon. Members across the water in the suffering and anguish of the people in Northern Ireland.

I listened with interest also to the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) when he said that this debate had "a familiar ring". How true those words are. I suppose that for some 18 years security debates have been held in this House, and what a duplicity of words has been uttered. It is true that faces will have changed on the Front Bench and that Ministers answering at the Dispatch Box will have changed. However, something has not changed. We have listened to a repeat of the same waffle and to the usual expressions of sympathy and the usual condemnations that are now a course that is taken by right hon. and hon. Members of this House. They took the usual course of using the phrase that they are sorry, they sympathise and understand the feelings of the people who are suffering the murder and destruction.

How do right hon. and hon. Members expect to understand? I should be interested to know from Front Bench Members how many widows they have visited, how many homes of the suffering they have attended and how many orphaned children they have spoken to in the past 18 years in order to understand how the people of Ulster feel. I shall gladly give way if any Front Bench Member wants to tell me. It is interesting to talk to other groups and the Front Benchers lecture us about what others are saying, but surely the people who are suffering in our Province have a right to be heard.

The Secretary of State said that it was the Government's

"determination to pursue the campaign to eliminate the scourge of terrorism." — [*Official Report*, 16 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. 1084.]

In past debates the Minister of State has used the words "the eradication of terrorism." When the debate has finished and the words have died on the air, Ministers will congratulate themselves that the debate is over; but Ulster will be back to violence, murder and the destruction of my constituents. The feeling of frustration that few people care or want to care about the plight of our community will prevail.

I resent the much publicised reason from the Northern Ireland Office for this debate. It has linked the debate to the death of Lord Justice Gibson and his wife, and I resent that. I equally resent the fact that the Secretary of State should make a trip along the border surrounded by great numbers of security guards and the Army and then stand before a television camera and say, "This is to prove that this is not a no-go area." How ridiculous can one get? The only time members of the security forces can enter many areas of the Province is when they are speeding through in armoured cars. That is disgraceful, but it is factual.

If hon. Members do not believe that, I gladly invite them to come to my constituency and see the parts where there are no checkpoints and where members of the security forces are not permitted to patrol the roads—where, indeed, they cannot because of the continuing spiral of IRA violence threatening their safety.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is my hon. Friend aware that when the Minister with responsibility for health, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), visited the Royal Victoria hospital, 300 troops and policemen were employed for his security?

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for that information. Indeed, when the Secretary of State slipped into my constituency to visit the RUC station at Newtownstewart after the IRA bombing during which a man took a heart attack and died, he could have visited the man's home — it was only 500 yards from the station, where the gentleman was lying in a coffin—to sympathise with the family, but he turned and went home. As a senior police officer pointed out to me, for the Secretary of State to make his jaunt into my constituency the security forces had to send RUC men at the dead of night to clear the roads. They resented that greatly because, to use their words, they were left to the wolves and the bombs under the roads. I resent that sort of so-called security policy, but we are supposed to live with that in the Province.

The Secretary of State well knows that Northern Ireland Members have been warned about wasting police time. I remind the House that when the Minister with responsibility for education, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) visited Omagh he was surrounded by about 200 policemen and security men. The western educational board had contacted the Northern Ireland Office and advised the Minister not to come. The chief officer of the board told me that the Minister was asked not to come as his visit would not be helpful, yet he forced himself on the people, wasted RUC time and put the lives of RUC men at risk. I know it is hard for such facts to be accepted, but facts are stubborn and I shall certainly make them plain.

Mr. John David Taylor: The Minister with responsibility for education does not often accept invitations to go anywhere in Northern Ireland. Was he welcomed in Omagh?

Rev. William McCrea: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the advice from the spokesman of the western educational board was appropriate; the Minister was not welcome. Nevertheless, the Minister forced himself on the board and he was chased out of Omagh. It is disgraceful when a Minister is told that his visit is unhelpful and would waste police time, that he continues with it for petty personal reasons and Northern Ireland propaganda reasons, especially when that same constituency cannot get the forces to attack the IRA or to provide the appropriate security to ensure that the people there have the right to live. That is indeed deplorable.

The decision of Unionist Members to request an emergency debate was taken at the funeral of Mr. Harry Henry at the commencement of that week of terrible

carnage and before the death of Lord Justice Gibson. We were not in any way forced to come to the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley) and the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) decided that the Unionists should make their views on security heard in the House.

The debate has been purposeful. Surely people will have heard from the statements of the Secretary of State and the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) that they are still devoid of any meaningful measures which will counter terrorism and bring it to an end. The debate has ensured that the general public in Northern Ireland will know that the Government have neither the will nor the determination to eradicate or crush the terrorist uprisings in our Province. That is a tragedy.

Last week my hon. Friends came to the House and submitted applications under Standing Order No. 20 to the Speaker's Office. The Secretary of State rushed to the House to make a statement to stop any debate, but we are delighted to have this opportunity to put certain matters on the record and we are certainly laying the facts clearly on the line for the House and the nation to see.

On 15 November 1986 an agreement was signed and we were told that its objective was threefold — peace, stability and reconciliation. The agreement cannot and never will achieve those three objectives. Lest I be accused of scaremongering, of not examining the facts or of dismissing achievements, perhaps it is appropriate for me to consider the achievements of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The first achievement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was the removal from the south of Garret FitzGerald, who had promised the Government of the United Kingdom a divorce Bill. He promised that the divorce Bill would liberalise society in the south of Ireland and attract Unionists to the South and to Dublin, who might find that it was not such a bad place after all. There was a referendum on the divorce Bill but there was also an election at which Garret FitzGerald was humiliated. He is now out of office. The Anglo-Irish Agreement resulted in what is termed in Northern Ireland a former gunman at the helm instead of Garret FitzGerald. Who would not want a former gunman or so-called terrorist at the helm of a democratic Government because that is a step forward? We should all agree that that is an achievement.

The second achievement was that the Anglo-Irish Agreement admitted that the South of Ireland is not able to provide adequate money to provide security forces to tackle the problem of terrorists even if it wanted to. It is a bankrupt society. One of the leading members of the Dail expected Her Majesty's Government to put up the money to pay for security along the border. He expected that this House should send funds to a foreign state that has harboured terrorists all these years. Our eyes are being opened by these revelations.

The third achievement of the Irish-Anglo Agreement was the isolation of the Unionist majority community by the Government. Where else in the United Kingdom do we have minority rule? At present it is not minority participation, it is minority rule. Today, when the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) was speaking, I saw the nods of approval from Ministers on the Front Bench because they thought that he was a new-found friend for the Conservative and Unionist party.

The Government have to look to the SDLP and Dublin for their friends, but they do so at the expense of the majority of the community because the whole reason behind the Anglo-Irish Agreement was to save the bacon of the SDLP. The SDLP could not face Sinn Fein on its own; it needed the electoral support of the Government of the United Kingdom. The principle of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) was "United Ireland or nothing". Today, members of the SDLP are relying on British Ministers to ensure that they are re-elected. The SDLP is relying on concessions given to it.

We have seen a terrible abuse of innocent, long-suffering, hard-working Ulster Unionists who are British through and through, who are proud to be British and who have gladly given their sons and daughters in the defence of Her Majesty's domain, unlike the nationalists and the Republicans, who used every opportunity they could to stab Her Majesty's loyal subjects and this House in the back whenever it suited them. I assure Ministers that if it suits the SDLP to stab them in the back in the future, it will be happy to do that. The leopard has not changed its spots. It has covered them to suit the occasion, but the time will come when the spots will be shown again. The mask will come off and the Government will realise that they should not have begged and courted the friendship of the SDLP.

The fourth achievement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was the continuation and intensification of a blood-curdling murder campaign by the IRA. The NIO seeks to tell us that the IRA campaign is in response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, because the Sinn Feiners are afraid that the agreement will work. That is the most diabolical falsehood that could be ever thought up. We know why the agreement came about. Her Majesty's chief Minister, the Prime Minister, told us why it came about. She said that she made the agreement because she was not willing to allow the murders to continue. It was the murders that brought about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. But whose murders? It was the continuing murders by the IRA that brought about the agreement. I am sure that the Secretary of State does not doubt the wisdom of the learned words of the Prime Minister about how this agreement came about.

It is interesting that it is said that the Sinn Fein was ready to accept that agreement, because its members said that without their bombs there would never have been an agreement, that more violence and more murders means more concessions. That is the reality. The lives and blood of a long-suffering Ulster people is a high price to pay. They are paying the penalty. The police, the UDR, the reserves and our British Army are paying the price for this awful unholy mess that the Government have got into and which, because of their pride, they are unwilling to acknowledge and correct.

The measures we have heard today will mean—make no mistake—that those murders will continue. Nothing that the Secretary of State said today will stop the murders in the Province. What he said today reminds me very much of the young child who went to its wealthy mother and said, "I want to speak to you, I want you to listen," but the mother put her hand in her purse and threw a £10 note at her child and said, "I have not got the time, take the money and spend it." We are not looking for money to solve the problem. We are not even looking for additional men.

At one of the funerals a week ago a senior member of the RUC said to me, "My voice will not be heard. You go to the House of Commons and tell the Secretary of State

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that he can put 20,000 more troops into Northern Ireland, but if he does not change their orders he will only be setting them up as ducks to be shot down by the IRA." More troops are not the answer; it is how those troops are deployed. It is how effectively the troops and the RUC are allowed to deal with the problem. That is the cry of the men on the ground.

I was given further information by another senior member of the security forces. I cannot reveal his name because the Chief Constable would quickly move him on somewhere else. The Chief Constable would deal with him in the same way that he is dealing with the representative of the Police Federation—he would silence him instead of listening to his views. The senior officer said that the hands of the security forces are still tied. He asked me to tell the Secretary of State that, instead of lecturing Unionist politicians and those who support the security forces, it was about time the Government supported the security forces, listened to them and supported them, not just with weaponry, but with orders that would allow them to do their jobs.

Hon. Members do not realise that if a UDR patrol stops a well-known Sinn Fein finger man in our community, a man whom the security forces have identified as the godfather of the IRA, they will be insulted by that person until they call a police patrol because they are not even allowed to open the boot or the door of his car. They are hardly able to speak to him in case he claims that he has been assaulted, which would lead to them being reprimanded.

That well-known Provisional Sinn Fein person who has pinpointed members of the security forces in my constituency and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East sits there and makes a mockery of the whole of the law and the whole security situation in our Province. When a police car comes up, naturally he opens the door, because he has humiliated the rest of the security forces. These are what are called effective measures.

I was on the verge of the Secretary of State's constituency last night and this morning. When I spoke to folk there about the situation, I found that quite clearly there are people in that constituency who are not happy about what is termed security. They say that every time they listen to the news about an atrocity they hear that security is to be tightened. They said that I must have listened to that statement so often that by now the Province is nearly choked. The Government say that they will tighten and tighten security, but nothing is more false. There is no tightening of security in the Province. It is ridiculous that the murdering IRA scum can snub their noses at the security forces, because unless the security forces can bring a charge that will stick in court they have to take the insults as members of the IRA go past them.

The Government had better start supporting the security forces in the most effective way by allowing them to take effective measures which, in the words of the security forces, means to eliminate. I can assure the House that if a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Royal Ulster Constabulary or the British Army were to eradicate an IRA terrorist he would find himself up on some charge, even though he had been effective in his duty. I say that because a sergeant in 6 Company of the UDR was promoted and recommended for his service, yet at the end of the month found himself in the unemployment list. Others were brought in to his place when he was removed. He was commended for his efficiency and then dumped. That seems to be an unusual way to carry out security policy.

On behalf of my constituents I have a right to ask that this nightmare is brought to an end. We want to live in peace but there are so many double standards and so much double-talk that no one can believe Ministers. We are told to sit back and remain calm, and are lectured about what we should do, but the Government will not listen to the wishes of the elected representatives of the people. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) speaks about inquiries into MI5. Bearing in mind the wealth of evidence, surely it is time that we demanded an inquiry into the way the Northern Ireland Office deals with the lives of Northern Ireland people. The Northern Ireland Office is selling a loyal part of Her Majesty's domain into the hands of her avowed enemies.

It might please the Secretary of State to stand with Mr. Lenihan and to be introduced to Charles Haughey. It would do him more good if he listened to the will of the people inside the Province instead of giving a major and substantial role in the day-to-day running of the affairs of Northern Ireland to a foreign Government. The Secretary of State shakes his head. Talk about a substantial and major role in the day-to-day running of the affairs of Northern Ireland was not some trumped-up charge by some twisted-minded Ulster Unionist. It was a statement by the former Justice Minister of the Irish Republic. That was the claim that he made when he went back to the South of Ireland.

Hon. Members are told that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is for the defence of the Union. The Dail is told that because of that agreement it has a major and substantial role to play in the day-to-day affairs of Northern Ireland. Whom do we believe? When will the Government stop this forked-tongue approach to Northern Ireland? It is our people that are dying, people that very few hon. Members, including the Secretary of State, come to Northern Ireland to see. My constituent Mr. Graham was only a UDR man and Mr. Henry was only a foreman in a job. The Secretary of State certainly did not attend Mr. Henry's funeral. Why was that? It was because he happened to be only an ordinary Ulsterman, fodder for the gunmen, a man who was left in the front line.

As elected representatives, we are supposed to take all this. We are supposed to follow the coffins, bury the dead, say nothing about it and act as nice little parliamentarians. I was elected to this House as a simple Ulsterman to speak in ordinary Ulster language about the realities of what is happening in Ulster. Even at this late hour, I appeal to the Government on behalf of the widows and orphans left and forgotten in our country finally to do what they promised to do—eradicate terrorism.

Rev. Ian Paisley: My hon. Friend is wasting his time.

Rev. William McCrea: I accept what my hon. Friend says, that I am wasting my time, but let it not be said that I did not try, even though there are those that sneer and think that there is something funny.

I should like to quote from a speech by the ex-moderator of the Irish Presbyterian Church, Dr. Dickinson. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North also spoke about this. This is not a speech by a politician or by some hothead who makes his point with a sweep of the hand. Dr. Dickinson said:

"It would appear from the fact that these scandalous deeds have been allowed to go on for so long that Mrs. Thatcher, and those who, with her, are responsible for security in Northern Ireland, have neither concern nor compassion for you Mrs. Graham or for the many others who have suffered as you have done."

Dr. Dickinson said that the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister have neither concern nor compassion for Mrs. Graham and he looked down at the widow when he said that. That is true, because the only way to prove Dr. Dickinson wrong is to take effective security measures to stop this murder, mayhem and destruction that has cursed our country.

Instead of making an agreement that was a concession to the murderers, the Government should not allow the murders to continue. Effective measures need to be taken to bring terrorism to an end. The blood of Ulster's innocents lies not only on the hands of those perpetrators of the violence, cursed, depraved, wicked and hellish though they are, but also at the door of those who have it in their power to stop the murder and the mayhem.

7.58 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) must not assume that any hon. Member sneers at him or at any of the Ulster Members when they talk about the carnage in Northern Ireland. Nor can he claim a monopoly on compassion for those who experience the effects of murder and maiming, though he lives with it day by day and some of us do not. That is the difference between hon. Members, but it is not a lack of compassion and the hon. Gentleman is entitled to be heard. At the same time, he must accept that, if he tries to lay unfair motives at the doors of other hon. Members, he will lose the respect of the House and the patience of the British people.

If the television cameras to which the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster referred were here, they would do him and his case more harm than if they were not. The way in which the hon. Gentleman presented his arguments did nothing to win over people who might be concerned about some of the serious security issues that he raised tonight. I should have liked to hear more about the need for reconciliation, about his preparedness to listen to other points of view and about the need for justice in Northern Ireland rather than the claims that he made for recrimination and for taking an eye for an eye.

Sometimes, some deep soul-searching is needed by the hon. Members who speak for the constituencies of Northern Ireland. They must ask themselves whether they do not bear some of the responsibility for events there. Perhaps that takes the form of their failure to provide leadership in the House over the past 18 months.

I join the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) in welcoming back the hon. Members from Ulster today, and I hope that they will continue to put positive points to the House. The way to win arguments is not through abuse but by trying to take people with one.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) made a number of points with which I wish to deal. He suggested that the Chief Constable of the RUC should take early retirement, but that he did not intend to undermine the Chief Constable's position. In saying that, that is precisely what he did. I met Sir John Hermon two years ago and I was extremely impressed by him, and by his impartiality and determination to deal with terrorism. He told me and my colleagues on the delegation that in Northern Ireland there are Protestants, Catholics and the RUC.

The last 18 months have been a difficult period. It was bound to be one; anything that is likely to defeat terrorism will cause difficulties and, probably, an escalation of violence in the short term. During that period, the RUC has been caught in the crossfire. It has performed bravely and well, independently and objectively. Contrary to the call by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds for the Chief Constable's early retirement, he is entitled to our wholehearted support.

The RUC is also entitled to the wholehearted support of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. That is why I have consistently said—for example, in the debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement—to the hon. Members for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that they must encourage people of the Catholic tradition to join the RUC and work with it. It is entitled to the full support of all Catholics in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds also said that he favoured the return of internment in Northern Ireland, at least on a partial basis. That would be a foolish move. We saw the effects of internment in Northern Ireland once before. It led to hunger strikes, more violence and greater alienation. That is not the way to proceed.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds also said that, although he voted for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, it has not delivered. The hon. Gentleman is not present now—having put his points on behalf of the RUC, he left the Chamber. He must ask himself what he expected the agreement to deliver in the first place. I refer him to the *Belfast Telegraph* of Thursday 23 April, in which Mr. Lenihan said that he envisaged

"that under the new arrangement there would be a better exchange of information in regard to techniques and intelligence, and a dovetailing of operations, with greater liaison between policemen on both sides of the border. 'We believe there is substantial room for improvement of that kind and the thrust should be for achieving that sort of practical co-operation on the ground'".

The agreement was never going to bring a miracle cure, but if it brings statements such as that from the Republic, it is all to the good, and we should build upon it.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), refuting something that was said by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), said that Protestants do talk to Catholics in Northern Ireland. I agree. When I was last there, four weeks ago, I was fortunate enough to meet a group of people in Limavady. They came from Protestant and Catholic homes, and they talked about the need for reconciliation, and the need to support the RUC and to make something of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

I went to Derry and stayed in Columba house, where I met Father Neil Carlin and Neil McClosky. The latter went on hunger strike for 55 days and virtually came back from the dead. He has renounced violence, has seen its futility, and is working for reconciliation. Surely we should be supporting people such as him and organisations such as the Belfast Trust, which is working for integration in the schools. I was impressed by what I saw of the trust's work. The trust and groups such as the Corrymeela community and Maranatha are doing what is needed to bring the different traditions together. There is one community, not two.

[Mr. David Alton]

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) mentioned the role of the churches, and in that context I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley). Northern Ireland is a scandal for Christianity. It needs moral leadership. If only the hon. Member for Antrim, North, who speaks with such passion and vigour and has such oratory at his disposal, would use his words to try to effect reconciliation in the island of Ireland, what a great contribution that would make. He must ask himself not only about the role of the British Government but about his own role.

If Protestants must talk to Catholics, Northern Ireland must talk to the people of Great Britain, too. This House is the place for such debates. I am glad to see the Unionists Members in their places, as the *Belfast Telegraph* and Presbyterian leaders urged them to be. Loyalty is a characteristic of the people of Northern Ireland. The greatest danger to the Union is the absence of Unionist Members from their places here. That would break the allegiance of ordinary British people to the Ulster community and would result in further tragedy. That is why I am glad to see them in their places tonight.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it does not sound well in Northern Ireland to hear lectures about participation from Conservative Members who come in for a moment and then leave, not willing to listen to the debates?

Mr. Alton: I agree. The right hon. Member for Spelthorne and others should have stayed for the debate, in which I should have liked to see more hon. Members take part.

I also agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth), who has said on previous occasions that it would be better, instead of having Orders in Council, to return to the ordinary procedure with Bills. We could then fully debate issues in the way in which we debated the emergency provisions, and about which there was a great deal of agreement on both sides of the House. In that debate the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West and his party, the Unionist party, the SDLP and the Conservative party were able to make common cause. After the election we should find ways in which to provide more time and better procedures to deal with Northern Ireland matters in a more rational way. I want the establishment of a Committee like the Welsh and Scottish Grand Committees or a Select Committee to examine the issues rather than deal with them in the combative atmosphere that prevails far too often in our debates.

Eighteen months ago the House decided overwhelmingly to support the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Many of us believed at the time that it was merely a step forward and would not be a panacea or universal remedy, but a way of recognising that there was an Irish dimension to the problem of Northern Ireland. We had to bring in the alienated nationalist community and detach it from the IRA. The agreement is beginning to do that and we must persevere with it. The House must demonstrate that it will do so and not put the agreement to one side.

There might be an indeterminate majority after the next general election and my right hon. and hon. Friends would certainly stand four square behind the agreement. To do otherwise would be to offer the IRA the opportunity to undermine yet further the democratic process and to drive Republican opinion back into the hands of Sinn Fein. That would be very much against the interests of all people in Northern Ireland. We must build on the agreement, and that is why we are advocating the need for a permanent joint security commission. We want to see joint anti-terrorism legislation enacted simultaneously in the Dail and at Westminster.

One of the reasons for the debate this evening is the tragic events that led to the murder of Lord Justice Gibson and his wife. They were murdered, or assassinated, by the IRA. I ask the Secretary of State to say when he replies whether he will consider other ways in which those who travel from North to South or South to North can make the journey. They should not be asked to leave their vehicles in no man's land and to transfer to another vehicle. Instead, they should be able to make the journey to their destination with the protection of the RUC or that of the Garda. I had the extraordinary experience only four weeks ago of transferring vehicles at a border point in the middle of nowhere, and that process cannot be a very sensible way of going about matters. It could lead to further tragedies of the sort that we have seen in Northern Ireland so recently.

Lord Justice Gibson's assassination is the latest in a long series of tragic deaths in Northern Ireland. The RUC has said, quite properly, that there are times when perhaps we do not place as much significance on the deaths of members of the security forces as on spectacular events such as Lord Justice Gibson's assassination. It is right that we should be spending time today discussing the deaths of all people in Northern Ireland and recognising the serious situation there. We should be trying to devise other ways of ensuring that the long process of normalisation continues in the North. That is why I welcome the publication of the UDA document entitled "Common Sense" a few weeks ago. The ideas set out within it—for example, the need for a responsibility-sharing devolved assembly—were good ones. That assembly idea is also one to which we should return after the general election.

I do not have time to raise a number of the other issues that I wished to put before the House, so instead, I shall ponder for a moment on some of the options if we do not persevere with the agreement. Sinn Fein recently published a document which in some ways is obscenely entitled "The Scenario for Peace". In that document Mr. Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein's president, claimed, according to the *Irish News*, that if one of the mainline British political parties decided to fight the next general election on disengagement from Northern Ireland, that party would form the next Government. Mr. Adams is obviously trying to lure political parties which are represented in this place to support the arguments that he has long advanced. I do not believe that there is any support for that view in most quarters of the House. However, I think that Unionist Members should be aware that the more they oppose an agreement that the overwhelming majority of hon. Members have supported, the more likely it is that the British public will support the views that Mr. Adams has been advancing.

Secondly, Mr. Adams has talked about resettlement grants. That suggestion is as obscene as the others that he has expounded. It is an example of the sort of argument that creates further friction and division in Northern Ireland. It is the sort of suggestion that one expects to hear from people in South Africa rather than from those

claiming to represent the republican tradition in Northern Ireland. I am pleased to hear that Dr. Joe Hendron of the SDLP vigorously spoke out against the proposal.

The third possibility is that the agreement might be abandoned. If that were to happen, it would, as I have already said, set back the cause of reconciliation. It would mean that the nationalist tradition in Northern Ireland would be further alienated. In abandoning the agreement, we would be playing into Sinn Fein's hands.

Fourthly, there is the possibility of sending in further troops and reintroducing internment. That, too, would be playing into Sinn Fein's hands.

Mr. Beggs: The hon. Gentleman is uttering the sort of claptrap that supporters of terrorism and the IRA continue to use. They do not want more British troops in Ulster, and that message has not got through yet. It is their way of blackmailing this Parliament to prevent the troops from being sent in and a proper job being done.

Mr. Alton: Surely the hon. Gentleman realises, 18 years after the troops were first sent into Northern Ireland, that the continued sending of troops will not solve the problems of Northern Ireland.

Rev. William McCrea: Allow them to do their job.

Mr. Alton: The troops should be allowed to do their job in Northern Ireland, but the sooner that they are put back into barracks and there is a normalisation of Northern Ireland's affairs, with the RUC dealing with everyday issues of law and order, the better it will be for everybody. I should have thought that that proposition would gain support from both sides of the House. Surely no hon. Member wants to see troops in the streets doing the job that the police should be doing. The best security that Northern Ireland can achieve is a strengthening of co-operation and a laying aside of old prejudices, bigotry and fears. Without a willingness to do that, the murders will continue.

8.17 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (Antrim, North): I take exception to what the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) said about Northern Ireland people. He said that Northern Ireland is a scandal to Christianity. The majority of people in the Province, regardless of their religion—Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Church of Ireland and so on—are charitable and deeply religious and could show a great deal to people in other parts of the United Kingdom. The people of Northern Ireland will be shocked when they learn what the hon. Gentleman has said about them. In youth organisations children are brought up to certain standards of life that should prevail in England. If similar standards applied in this country it would be the better for it.

The hon. Gentleman said that the troops should be withdrawn to barracks. That has been said by the IRA time after time. To say that is an open invitation to the IRA to redouble its efforts. I have a great regard for the hon. Gentleman but the two statements to which I have referred will cause great anger in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kilfedder: No, I shall not give way. I am timing myself because I know that there are others who wish to contribute to the debate.

When I last spoke in the Chamber, which was before Easter, I anticipated that more people would be killed in Northern Ireland. I was proved right. The only thing that can be said about this debate is that anyone who says that more deaths will follow it will make a true statement. That may be the only true statement in the entire debate.

When I last addressed the House I took the opportunity—I wish to take it again—to pay tribute to the gallant members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the UDR and of the Regular Army. They deserve the full, unequivocal and unqualified support of everyone in Northern Ireland, but sadly that support is not given by everyone. The opportunity to do so was missed by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). Instead of saying that the police and the Army should be supported by the communities that he and his SDLP colleagues represent, he launched an attack on all measures taken by the security forces to defeat the Provisional IRA.

Anyone with any sense knows that the enemy of all decent people in Northern Ireland is the IRA or any other terrorist organisation. The enemy is not the police. The police and every other member of the security forces face death every day that they are on duty. They are dedicated men and deserve our unqualified and grateful thanks.

The atrocity at the border last week, and all the other incidents that have taken place along it, confirm the need for what I described many years ago in the House as a cordon sanitaire along the border. The Army would then be fully engaged in meeting, dealing with and defeating the Provisional IRA. It is not the duty of the police, which is a civil organisation, to engage in war with the IRA. What my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said was absolutely right: the Army, not the police, should be used in such areas.

The murders of Lord Justice and Lady Gibson over a week ago were horrific offences. They were a kind, gentle and compassionate couple whose lives enriched the community which they served with great distinction. Lady Gibson was president of the Girl Guides Association. The fact that Lord Justice Gibson was the second most senior member of the Ulster judiciary created the tremendous publicity that his killing was given in the media. Had it been a policeman or a soldier, I regret to say that neither the Secretary of State nor any other Minister in the Northern Ireland Office would have made a statement in the House, yet there have been IRA killings time after time. It seems that there is an acceptable level of violence, no matter what the Government may say.

When I listened to the speech of the Secretary of State in opening this debate I wondered why we were all here today discussing security in Northern Ireland because, according to the Secretary of State, the Provisional IRA has only a few members and it has no support in either the Irish Republic or Northern Ireland. If the IRA has only a few members and is shunned and isolated, how can it operate with impunity and cause such devastation in much of Northern Ireland, particularly along the border?

The Secretary of State does not fully comprehend the situation in Northern Ireland. I am surprised that this is the first occasion since the present IRA terrorist campaign began 18 years ago that the Government have not responded with a massive show of strength to meet the horrendous IRA atrocities and satisfy the anger and frustration of the Ulster people.

The Prime Minister brought the Anglo-Eire Agreement back to the House, and most hon. Members from England, Scotland and Wales regarded it as a miracle cure for the problems of Northern Ireland. The House gave her

[Mr. Kilfedder]

a tremendous reception and every English Member believed the statement that the London-Dublin accord would bring peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Viscount Cranborne: No.

Mr. Kilfedder: I make an exception for the hon. Gentleman, but I was right in saying that most English Members believed that, with honourable exceptions such as the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne). I believe that the Prime Minister was misled by officials in the Foreign Office. There has been no peace and reconciliation; the opposite has happened. The number of killings this year is more than the number of killings in the first four months of 1986 and Northern Ireland is divided more than ever.

The Secretary of State declared today that the members of the IRA would, when caught, be subject to the full rigour of the law. In the first instance, they have to be caught. Many terrible atrocities have been committed for which no one has been brought to justice. My hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) intervened in the Secretary of State's speech to make that point. The murderers of my cousin on the border of Northern Ireland are free to roam around because the full rigour of the law has not been brought against them. There is no reason why those people should not be put out of circulation. Therefore, much against my better judgment, I agree with what my hon. Friend said: there should be some selective detention, since otherwise those people will be free to urge young people to commit murders.

Not only do they have to be caught but, once they are caught, they can make an admission which can be contested in court. They can say that they have been ill-treated while in custody. Almost as a matter of routine, those statements are thrown out by the judge. When they are convicted — only a few people are convicted, compared with the number who have been involved in terrorist crimes — they can obtain a special remission, which means that many IRA members who have been convicted of heinous offences are back on the streets training a new generation of young people to become involved in IRA terrorism.

The Secretary of State said, after the weekend killings, that the terrorists were showing themselves to be increasingly desperate. I do not know where the Secretary of State has been for the past 18 years, or indeed for the past two years. Does he not know that the doctrine of terrorism is to terrorise? The terrorists are not desperate; they are out to create the maximum havoc, to spread fear, to demoralise not only the security forces in Northern Ireland but members of the Government, and to make members of the English press feel that the Government should get out of Northern Ireland, clean their hands of the problem and leave it to others to deal with. We cannot get away from the fact that a war is being waged in Northern Ireland. The Provisional IRA's bombs and bullets kill, destroy and mutilate, but it seems to many people in Northern Ireland that the Secretary of State uses soft words and press statements issued from his redoubt at Stormont castle to slap the wrists of the IRA.

The decent people of Ulster, who are the potential victims of the Provisional IRA's largely sectarian campaign of slaughter, have been urged by the Secretary of State to show steadiness and remain quiet in the face of death. That really is the language of the abattoir — all right, be quiet, go on in, never mind the noise or the smell of blood, just stay quiet. But the Ulster people have had 18 years of that. They cannot see any determination by the Government to bring it to an end, as the citizens of any other part of the United Kingdom would expect. The will does not seem to be there and the IRA realises that. That is why the Government now, belated though it may be, must show that they are determined, by the use of troops and every sophisticated weapon, to search out and destroy the IRA.

I conclude on a political note with regard to the Anglo-Eire Agreement. I had never thought that it would be possible for the Conservative Government to alienate the Loyaltist majority of Northern Ireland. They have achieved that, but at what cost? They do not realise even now the deep hurt that the Ulster Loyalist community, which includes Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, feel at the betrayal by the British Government entering into an Anglo-Eire Agreement without consulting — that is all we wish to emphasise — the elected representatives of the Unionist majority. That was done after we had heard in this Chamber time after time from successive Governments that no action would be taken in Northern Ireland to create an Assembly with devolved power without having support across the religious divide. That assurance has been shamelessly broken.

There is still a will among many decent people in Northern Ireland, irrespective of their religion, to make political progress. It is almost impossible to have political progress when there is an awful campaign of terrorism resulting in slaughter, mutilation and destruction. We must not give up hope. I do not rely too much on the British Government helping to achieve political progress. The elected representatives of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland must see whether there is a way forward. The Ulster people are resilient. They will never be subservient or capitulate to terror. They are determined to survive this war. In my judgment they will win through in the end.

8.30 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): When I was preparing for the debate I acquired a large mass of facts and statistics. When I looked at them I realised that I had the perfect material for making the sort of speech that the Prime Minister used to make in the House. I assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that I rapidly went back to the drawing board.

Today we were confronted by the Secretary of State, who stood at the Dispatch Box and told us that he was there to put forward the facts. I have no objection to hard, cold facts, but I object to the wrong conclusions being drawn time after time and being presented as if they had come from the mouth of God himself, if I may put it that way in the presence of so many reverend gentlemen.

Getting the truth out of the available information may be difficult for the Secretary of State. He may not take time to do it himself but may rely on his officials to do it for him. One foolish suggestion that he put forward this afternoon was that Sinn Fein had been humiliated at the recent election in the Irish Republic because it got only 1·8 per cent. of the total vote. That is nonsense. The truth is

that Sinn Fein fought only 60 per cent. of the constituencies; if it had fought them all its percentage of the vote would have been considerably higher.

The Secretary of State also forgot that in the Irish Republic the single transferable vote system of proportional representation is used in elections. What matters in that system is the quota, not the overall majority in any constituency. If the right hon. Gentleman looked at the figures, he would see that in Donegal, North-East, Sinn Fein got 32 per cent. of the quota. That is not a small proportion. When one considers that that is the constituency represented by Neil Blaney in the Dail, we must remember that Mr. Blaney was getting most of the IRA vote in that constituency.

In Donegal, South-West, Sinn Fein got only 16 per cent. of the quota, but the Workers party, to whom Sinn Fein electors freely transferred votes, got 31 per cent., so that is a total of 47 per cent. of the quota. In the Cavan-Monaghan constituency, between them they got 41·5 per cent. of the quota, in Cork, North Central they got 46 per cent. between them and in Dublin, Central between them they got 50 per cent. of the quota.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Would my hon. Friend care to comment on why Sinn Fein electors in many constituencies should give their first preference vote to Sinn Fein when they could go immediately to the patron of the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland, Charles Haughey and Fianna Fail?

Mr. Ross: My hon. Friend was hasty; I am coming to that.

Another aspect of proportional representation is that votes are transferred within the political family or within the political segment to which electors perceive themselves as belonging. When Workers party and Sinn Fein electors finished transferring to each other, which they did freely, they then transferred to the party led by Mr. Haughey. Therefore, they consider themselves, as we would say brutally in Ulster, as being of one sow's litter. The House should take careful note of that simple fact of political life in Ireland.

The Secretary of State also talked about the security position in Northern Ireland. He gave us many selective statistics. If the right hon. Gentleman and the Minister of State were to go to Waterside in Londonderry, to the Protestant part of the city, they would see a large police station which has not had a brick laid on it for two years because the contractors were terrorised by the IRA to the point where they walked off the site and dare not come back. If they go to Strabane, they will see a place where there should be a police station, but it is not even started yet. That should tell the House and the country more about the strength and capability of the IRA than the statistics that are thrown across the House year after year.

The IRA has demonstrated its strength and its capability in every part of the Province. It killed two members of the RUC in Portrush in my constituency. It killed two more members of the RUC who were on duty in the constituency of Foyle but who lived in my constituency. It has killed at will throughout the length and breadth of Northern Ireland in the last few weeks. The IRA has a policy of murder which it is carrying through with ruthless and merciless efficiency.

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) laughed when we talked about 100,000 votes for Sinn Fein. He said that it would be impossible to have 15,000 on the streets. It does not matter whether it is possible. The IRA does not need 15,000 gunmen. Grivas said that he never had more than 150 in Cyprus at any one time, yet he drove out the British. We should come down to the fact of what an IRA terrorist campaign is. It is a small number of murderers being active at any time. That is all that it takes.

There may be talk of police success, but let us consider where the police have not been successful. The so-called supergrass trials have almost collapsed. Quigley and Gilmore got immunity; 66 people went back on the streets. The case of Whoriskey was not proceeded with; 21 had been charged. That is a total of over 80 who went free. That is not counting those who came back from Donegal, never mind those who did not go on the run. So there are well over 100 terrorists or perhaps nearly 200 terrorists in the Londonderry city area alone.

When the Minister of State replies, perhaps he will not tell us about the police successes and about all the people who have been arrested; perhaps he will be able to tell me and the rest of the country how many Provisional IRA murders have been cleared in the constituency of Foyle, which I represented until 1983, and in Londonderry, East, which I now represent, since this Administration came to power. He should tell me and the people I represent how many people have been murdered by Republican terrorists in that area, how many have been made amenable, and how many of those crimes are still unsolved. I think the position is no better in Fermanagh and south Tyrone.

The IRA runs interrogation schools. Its members can stand up to interrogation and the police are in severe difficulty. Perhaps the Minister will also tell us how many people are on bail for hijacking, for petrol bombing and for membership of the IRA, for which 269 are serving sentences in the Irish Republic on the word of a Garda superintendent under a law which we do not have.

The Secretary of State told us that there is evidence that much of the explosive is manufactured in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the Minister will be more precise and will tell us exactly what proportion of the explosive captured and the explosive used in the last 18 months, or for as long a period as he cares to take us back, came from the Irish Republic. He should tell us how much came from Northern Ireland and what the police have done to stop its manufacture in Northern Ireland. We would all be interested in that information.

I have directed the attention of the, sadly, sparsely attended House to what I believe is the strength of the IRA. If the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister will inquire about it, no doubt they will be able to lay their hands on a transcript of the speech made in Londonderry on Easter Sunday by Martin McGuinness, who is well known for his IRA and Sinn Fein activity in Northern Ireland. They will find that that speech is a tremendous call to arms. He praised the women for their vital role in the active service units of the IRA. He said that he took pride in today's IRA volunteers. He said:

> "Irish freedom could only be achieved through the armed offensive of the IRA who were the guarantors of an achievable peace in Ireland. We are going to win. We will never be suppressed."

That was not the speech of a man who faced defeat or the slightest fear. It was the speech of a man who was sure of victory—a man who saw the winning post ahead, and he was out in front and racing for it. We have to change that attitude before we can talk about defeating the

[Mr. Ross]

IRA and getting back peace. This situation has not come about through anything other than Government policy or perhaps the policy the Government have carried through. It has been carried through because of pressure from murder. There was the murder of Airey Neave in the precincts of the House some years ago. The Government turned and ran from their 1979 election manifesto.

On 12 February this year, in answer to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), the Secretary of State said that the present Home Secretary had as his first ambition the 1979 manifesto, but was unable to proceed. I remind the House that the present Home Secretary went to Northern Ireland on 11 September 1984. A bomb went off in Brighton on 12 October of that year. If it were not that which changed the Government's mind in 1984, perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us who the Government consulted and who advised them so that they were not able to proceed with the 1979 manifesto statement. To the people of Ulster—and I point out that they can also read *Hansard*, just in case people here think that they cannot—it seems that the Government broke and ran when Airey Neave was murdered in the car park of the House of Commons. They broke and ran again when the bomb went off in Brighton. That does not sit very well with people who have been bombed, shot or murdered for more years than most of us care to remember.

I could say more, but I should like to hear what other hon. Members have to say in the debate. I believe that only a total, fundamental change of Government policy will solve the problems of Ulster. I believe that we have fruitlessly and needlessly expended treasure and lives for many years. We hear a tremendous shout every time that the IRA goes through its sequence of one murder after another—that steady haemorrhage of ordinary people—that builds up to a peak when the IRA kills a prominent individual, and then stops, as it has done for the past week, and then starts again. There is a steady death after death, drip after drip, to try to wear us down. It has not managed to do so yet.

Every time that the IRA builds up to a peak there is a tremendous flurry. More troops are brought in, more changes are made in the RUC, all sorts of things are promised, but all that happens is that we temporarily disturb the bloody froth on top of the evil brew that is spawned by the IRA under the Government's policy. The policy that the Government have pursued has given the IRA hope of ultimate victory. It lies behind Martin McGuinness's speech and behind all the evil that we have suffered.

Mr Maginnis *rose*——

Mr. Ross: I should not want my hon. Friend to think that I was equating him with the gentleman in Londonderry. I know that he and the other fellow are poles apart.

I note that the Government also apply a strange standard of democracy to Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State—strangely enough, it appears on the same page of *Hansard* of 12 February; it has not been changed, even in the fortnightly volume—said:

"Democracy is not about the rule of the majority. It is about the position of and proper respect for the interests of the minority."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1987, Vol. 108, c. 446.]

The Government have proceeded on that standard. It is no wonder that the minority have every right to believe that their interests, and theirs alone, are paramount and that, therefore, the Government are promoting a system of minority rule that found its fullest expression in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Until the fundamental root and branch change of policy that I have called for takes place, there can be no hope of peace or progress towards stability or reconciliation in Ulster. Quite honestly, as long as the present Government Front Bench is responsible for Northern Ireland, there is no hope for us.

8.44 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Several hon. Members have spoken of the position and importance of religious leaders in the Province. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who spoke from the Liberal Benches, and who also is a Roman Catholic, will agree that there have been times when we have been distressed at what appears to be Roman Catholic ambivalence towards terrorism in Northern Ireland. However, those who know a little about the Province know of the shining courage of a number of Catholic priests who have stood against the Provisionals and against other private armies. I can think of one who went to the rescue of a man who was being kneecapped. He found himself looking down the barrel of a gun, but managed to outface the terrorist behind it. On the other hand, there have been some who, led astray by a spurious liberation theology, perhaps, have even appeared to implicate themselves in support of the Provisionals.

I welcome—I believe the House welcomes it also—the statement made recently by the two Bishops Daly. I have a soft spot in my heart for Father Denis Faul of Dungannon. He went on the record as saying that if the British were to hold a secret referendum of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland, only 20 per cent. would vote for a united Ireland. After the recent murder of Lord Justice Gibson and his wife, Father Faul said that it was "a mortal sin to be an active member of an organisation like the Provisional IRA."

He uttered those words on Radio Ulster. He went on to say:

"I hope the parents do say to their sons: 'It is a mortal sin to be an active participant in the Provisional IRA, and you must get out of it, not only for the good of the community, but for the good of your immortal soul'."

Father Faul said that the Roman Catholic Church had continually said that. Perhaps he was speaking of the earlier troubles of 1956-62 when a powerful influence was exerted by the archbishops and bishops of Ireland who, in the course of a statement, said:

"a civil war between the people of one nation causes greatest injury, and is most to be avoided . . . we declare that it is a mortal sin for a Catholic to become or remain a member of an organisation or society which arrogates to itself the right to bear arms and use them against its own or another State; that it is also sinful for a Catholic to co-operate with, express approval of, or otherwise assist, any such organisation or society, and that, if the co-operation or assistance be notable, the sin committed is mortal. With paternal insistence we warn young men to be on their guard against any such organisation or society, and not to be induced by false notions of patriotism to become members of it."

I also welcome certain statements that have come from the SDLP concerning the RUC. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) is not present, but I understand that he now favours permission to be given to the RUC and the Garda Siochana to operate on both sides

of the border. I have asked myself what kind of Anglo-Irish Agreement it is when indignation is expressed by the United Kingdom because an Irish Air Corps helicopter —presumably looking for terrorists; I hope so—crosses into United Kingdom air space, or when protests and amends have to be made because, for the protection of human life, a listening device is placed by British soldiers just across the border.

I wonder whether we would carry the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh with us if we were to propose, say a three-mile frontier zone on both sides of the line where joint forces or forces including personnel seconded from the other country could operate freely. A number of hon. Gentleman have referred to the capability, equipment and training of the Garda Siochana. If there is any help that we can give and that is required, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, when he replies, to assure us that it will be given.

How long can we continue in this way? Either we make the border secure—and the place of the Army seems to me to be on the frontier, not in the streets — or the frontier should be sealed.

Soon after Lord Justice Gibson and his wife were killed by explosives, Terence Finbar McKenna blew himself up with explosives intended for others. He had been released from prison after serving 10 years out of 17 to which he had been sentenced for explosives and firearms offences. I think that it was the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) who drew attention to the absurdity of those who are fighting against us in what are warlike conditions —although it is not a war— being freed to rejoin the ranks of the Provisional IRA, INLA or any private army that disgraces the title Loyalist.

As the House knows, all sentenced prisoners are granted remission of 50 per cent. of their sentences automatically, subject to certain conditions of behaviour. I have queried that with my hon. Friend the Minister of State by question and by letter. My hon. Friend argues against any type of parole on the ground that it is impracticable, but I seize upon certain words that he wrote to me:

> "The present arrangements are not set in concrete, but there are some major difficulties that would have to be overcome."

I would say that the sooner those difficulties are overcome the better; otherwise — and perhaps in any case — we should examine the new case for preventive detention put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), by the hon. Member for North Down and by other hon. Members who have spoken.

Of course, the instrument of internment was discredited because of the indiscriminate manner in which it was practised by the Northern Ireland Government of the time. However, the case seems to be there. It was always considered in the South to be a legitimate expedient in fighting terrorism. Indeed, it was decisive in earlier troubles. If it is to be considered, I believe that it should be considered jointly with Dublin.

Some of my constituents, and those of other hon. Members, were not born when the troubles began; now, they are voting. From time to time, they ask us when the troubles will end. The terrorists are encouraged to cling to a false hope that we may give up and give in by the repeated spectacle of British Ministers moving from one failed political initiative to another. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), in an impressive speech, said that it had been a repeated mistake for the Government to seek to be doing something for the sake of being seen to be doing something. As he said, the Anglo-Irish Agreement is the latest and the worst in a series of initiatives which have proved not only futile but lethal. They have substituted for the alienation of a minority — an alienation that has been exaggerated by Republican propaganda — the estrangement of the majority of the population. They have aroused new fears of a wave of sectarian murder. There have been recent terrible sectarian murders in the Province—I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds has returned — and, at times, the RUC has been placed between two fires.

The agreement is a triumph of Irish diplomacy — I nearly added, "over British stupidity". But triumphs can be mistakes in diplomacy, and this is the second time that an Irish Government have made the mistake of asking too much and getting too much. That is why Sunningdale failed. Her Majesty's Government are impaled on the agreement. I suppose that they will say that it cannot be repudiated, but there is provision for review.

I should like to be constructive, rather than merely denouncing the agreement. My views on it are known. I feel that it could give way to a larger treaty—an equal treaty, based on reciprocity and co-operation.

It is said that the reaction of the Unionists, and of the overwhelming majority of people in the Province, has been unreasonable: they should not have behaved like that. But it was predictable, and predicted, that they would do so. It is no good saying that they should not have behaved like that, and that they should have seen it differently. We must deal with the state of the Province as it is. The Unionists believe that the Union has been endangered by the agreement. Although my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) said that I was wrong, they believe it to be a form of condominium or joint authority which was rejected out of hand by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the time of the New Ireland Forum. That was the view of Dr. Garret FitzGerald when justifying the agreement to the Dail Eireann.

How, then, do we remove the Unionists' fear that the Union is in danger? There is one sovereign way to do so. That is to govern Northern Ireland as though it were as much a part of the United Kingdom as is England, Wales or Scotland. Then the Unionists would feel free and safe to stretch out the hand of friendship to nationalist neighbours, and to the neighbour in the south.

8.57 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): It is always an honour in a debate on Northern Ireland to be called immediately after the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), with his unbroken record of fidelity to the interests and rights of the people of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. The speech that he has just delivered would bear careful examination by the Government, both for its points of detail on the matter of security, and for the observations that he made on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement 18 months ago was welcomed and approved by an overwhelming majority in the House. They were not, however, left without intimations of what its consequences would be. I quote from only one expression at the time about what those consequences would be:

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

"the continued sequence of terrorism, murder and death in Northern Ireland which this agreement will not prevent but will maintain and foment."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 955.]

This debate is therefore an important opportunity for hon. Members representing seats in other parts of the United Kingdom to understand the relationship of cause and effect between the Anglo-Irish Agreement that they approved 18 months ago and security in Northern Ireland that is being debated this evening. It is not a matter on which it is necessary, in order that hon. Members may exercise their judgment, to have a detailed knowledge of the circumstances in Ireland or in Northern Ireland, or a detailed knowledge of every element in that remarkable document, the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Simple facts that are within the reach and verification of every hon. Member will bear out the proposition that I have just stated, that there is a relationship of cause and effect between that agreement and the escalation of murder and terrorism in the Provinces, which is the subject that concerns the House today.

I shall describe that agreement in minimal terms, unique though it is. It is an international agreement that accords to another country an institutionalised voice in the internal affairs of a part of the United Kingdom. Whether or not one cares to call that a condominium, whether or not one cares to describe under that title the Anglo-Irish Conference that operates within the terms of that agreement, is a matter of taste or of emphasis; but the facts about it are not open to dispute. It was to this House that in 1982 the Prime Minister said:

"no commitment exists for Her Majesty's Government to consult the Irish Government on matters affecting Northern Ireland. That has always been our position. We reiterate and emphasise it, so that everyone is clear about it."—[*Official Report*, 29 July 1982; Vol. 28, c. 1226.]

After the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Prime Minister could no longer have used those words.

The external country with which this unique arrangement was made was not just any country. It was not an agreement with Taiwan or with Outer Mongolia. It was an agreement with a neighbouring state that claims as its own the territory of that part of the United Kingdom to which alone the Anglo-Irish Agreement relates. That claim is and remains enshrined in the constitution of the state that was the other party to this treaty. It is not a claim that is taken lightly or overlooked by the political representatives of the people of that country. Indeed, they were careful, when signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to sign a version that did not accord to this country its full title as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

There is another important fact about the Irish Republic. Upon the Republic's territory is based a terrorist organisation whose purpose is to bring all Ireland within a single state and thus detach Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom to which it still belongs.

No one — friend or foe, British or Irish — could contemplate this unique arrangement into which Her Majesty's Government have entered without coming to the conclusion that the British Government had lent themselves to the proposition that the purpose which the IRA sets before itself, the purpose which is embodied in the constitution of the Irish Republic, is on its way to being attained. Furthermore, no one could fail to regard that agreement and its working as part of a progress towards the attainment of that end.

Let hon. Members consider the effects of such an act upon the terrorist organisation with which we are concerned. When a terrorist organisation perceives—it is merely necessary for this purpose that there should be perception—that it is moving towards the achievement of its objective, it comes under two kinds of pressure. It is immensely encouraged to step up its activity so that the achievement may redound to its own credit. Part of the creed of the Irish Republican Army, a creed that it has entertained throughout its existence, is that the object is not worth attaining unless it is attained by means of bloodshed and violence. I say that as a simple matter of fact which anyone can verify: the attainment of its aim by violence is part of the creed and faith of the IRA.

So the first consequence upon a terrorist organisation's being presented with the prospect of success and the attainment of its objective is to spur it to increased efforts. The second is this: that organisation must make sure that when the result is attained, it is attained by its own agency. The all-Ireland state which is the objective of the IRA has to be the sort of all-Ireland state at which that organisation is aiming. Thus, the IRA has not only to be in on the act; it has to get ahead of the rate at which the act is moving: The IRA must be "there on the night".

Nothing could therefore be more guaranteed to stimulate and ensure the continuance and escalation of IRA violence than an act of state such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which held out to the IRA the likelihood that two Governments, and possibly a third — the United States is not disinterested in the matter—look forward to the attainment of that which has always been the IRA's objective.

The agreement has another effect which is relevant to terrorism — the effect upon those on whom terrorism battens. As has been repeatedly stated in the debate, there is a large section of the Northern Ireland population who could be classified as Catholic, Republican or anti-Unionist but who have no wish whatever to subserve the purposes or the methods of the IRA. Yet the IRA depends for its ability to operate upon at any rate the passive acquiescence of a considerable section of that part of the population. Consider the effect upon that part of the population when it is told, more graphically than words can tell it, that the British Government, as well as the Government of the Irish Republic, believe events are developing towards the attainment of the purpose of the IRA—an all-Ireland state into which Northern Ireland will be embodied.

It is perfectly easy to understand the reaction of those people. "Why," they say, "should we expose ourselves to danger, why should we take risks, in order to sustain a state that is despaired of even by the Government of the country to which it belongs?" Nothing can better promote the circumstances that terrorists need to operate than to give an assurance to those who would otherwise oppose them that in doing so they are opposing an event that has been decreed and will be brought to maturity by the very Government of the country to which they belong. Thus, it is not only the IRA but also those on whom it depends who are materially affected by what has been done. It was perfectly predictable that the action which the House

approved 18 months ago would have the effects that we see developing, by which the House and the country are dismayed.

However, hon. Members faced with the assertion that a direct relationship of cause and effect exists between the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the growth of terror, may say, "But surely the IRA was operating before the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Surely there is no novelty in the terrible events that we are asked to contemplate. Surely the 16 years since 1971 have been studded in Northern Ireland by deeds of terror and murder? How, then, can you say that there is a clear and definite causal connection between the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985 and the problem with which the House and the United Kingdom are now confronted?"

To that objection, there is a simple and complete answer. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was, and was seen to be, only the culmination of a political process which—with intervals and with pauses — has been pressed forward by Her Majesty's Government ever since the end of the 1960s. There has been no time since 1969 when the observer watching the Government's policies towards Northern Ireland would not say, when the IRA would not say, when those among whom the IRA live would not say, "The British Government are engaged on a course of action designed to take us in the direction the IRA wish to travel."

That condition has been present since 1969. What we are seeing and debating now is but an intensification of its consequences, because of the peculiar clarity with which the unique event of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has emphasised and brought into the open the policy on which the British Government have been engaged for the past 16 or 17 years. So there is no contradiction.

In that observation lies the answer that we seek. This is a debate about security, and much of it has naturally been taken up with specific propositions as to the manner in which security could be increased, the security forces strengthened and the IRA more surely dealt with. Yet no measures of that kind—although such measures are no doubt necessary — can be of avail if they are being counteracted by the visible fact that there all the time is the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the settled policy of Her Majesty's Government, in collusion with other Governments, bent on bringing about exactly that which is the objective of the IRA.

There will be no answer to the agony of Northern Ireland unless and until the United Kingdom is seen decisively to have abandoned a course designed to lead to the separation of Ulster from the United Kingdom and its embodiment in some kind of all-Ireland state. Until it is seen that that course of events—which, through all its varieties, has flowed on since 1969 down to the present — has been deliberately broken off by the will of Government, Parliament and people, our soldiers will fight and die in vain, the RUC will make its sacrifices in vain, and the people of that part of the United Kingdom will despair and say, "We are betrayed by the country to which it is said that we belong."

The Government have it in their power to do so. We are not completely determined by whatever were the reasons—be their fears of terrorism or political reasons of a more esoteric character — which led the Government to sign that unique and unprecedented instrument in November 1985. We are still free agents. The Government of this country are still free to make or unmake the Anglo-Irish Agreement when it comes to be reviewed. They are still free to say that they will not have an agreement that is so one-sided and seen to be usable as a means for detaching a part of the United Kingdom and embodying it in another state.

There would be no mistaking that message, or the reaction, if the Government would only give it. There was a period—it did not last many weeks—early in 1985 when there seemed to be signs that the Prime Minister did intend to go no further along the path that was to lead to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Those of us who represent Northern Ireland seats can testify what an incredible change in the general atmosphere was produced by the Prime Minister's "Out, out, out" declaration, when people in Northern Ireland of all parties and all policies, of all expectations and all aspirations, could say, "At last, after so many years, we know where we stand. We know where our future is to be. Our future is to be within the United Kingdom, enjoying, we hope, all the rights that the rest of the United Kingdom enjoy. In any case, we know where we stand. We know where, with whom and in what country we must live and work together."

The people of Northern Ireland, despite all the calumnies against them, will live and work together if they are enabled so to do and not continually prevented by the Government giving to their terrorist enemies the assurance, "Carry on in the same way; you need fear nothing; you will attain your end; it is pre-determined." The people of Northern Ireland are pastmasters at living together. Despite all their differences of religion, perception and background, they have done so with skill and success over the centuries. They ask this House and the United Kingdom to enable them to do so again in peace.

At the commencement of his speech the Secretary of State laid out a history which started with the casualty figures of 1972, 1973 and 1974. He pointed out that, with sufficiently gross averaging, one can say that there has been a gradual diminution since that time. So indeed there has, particularly in periods such as the later 1970s, when it seemed that the continual constitutional experimentation with Northern Ireland was about to be abandoned and that the change for which we call this evening had in fact come about. But the Secretary of State should have gone back before 1972. He should have gone back to the 1960s when an IRA campaign, which was virtually restricted to the border, was successfully dealt with between 1957 and 1962. He should have gone back to the years of peace which Northern Ireland enjoyed from the middle 1920s once the secession of the Irish Free State was accepted as part of political geography. Northern Ireland was a place of peace and security over those years. It was a country in which a single murder was an event of horror and astonishment.

We have it within our power to restore that condition to our fellow countrymen in Northern Ireland. The Government have it in their power, resting on this House, to say, "We will set aside and turn our backs upon anything which could give the IRA or anyone else the conviction that ahead lies the achievement of its purpose." That is the appeal addressed tonight through this House to the Government and the Prime Minister.

9.17 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I tell the Government that at least one Unionist Member will return

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

to Northern Ireland tomorrow who has not been disappointed by the Secretary of State's speech. I never expected the Secretary of State for one moment to have the guts to take on the Provisional IRA. I never expected the Government to be prepared to take the necessary steps to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland. I never thought for one moment that they would be prepared to grapple with the IRA in the only way that it can be defeated—by having the resolve and a resolute security policy against terrorism in Northern Ireland. As one would require an expectation before one could be disappointed, I will not be disappointed tonight.

I listened to the pathetic utterances of the Secretary of State as he told us, "The IRA has demonstrated a new ruthlessness." Clearly the Secretary of State is unaware of the events of the past decade or more. The ruthlessness of the IRA has been seen in shapes and forms in the past 17 years that the Secretary of State obviously has allowed to pass him by. There is nothing new in the IRA's ruthlessness. No event that the IRA has carried out over the past days or weeks has caused me the least shock about its tactics or the kind of campaign that it is prepared to carry out.

In the absence of the Secretary of State, I tell the Minister of State that the Government's present policy is a failed policy. No tinkering with that policy will ever produce success with regard to security. A root and branch change is required. There must be a new security policy and above that there must be a will to win and a will to defeat terrorism, which is sadly lacking in the Government at the moment. When the will to win exists and the right policy on defeating terrorism is present, the tactics, the deployment and the number of troops will all fall into place. I suspect that if the Secretary of State continues to adopt the present security policy, he will continue to watch the obituary columns in our newspapers as more Ulster people and, sadly, more people from this side of the water die as a result of his failure and incompetence.

It is about 18 months—526 days—since I last spoke in the House. I spoke as the result of an agreement that was signed to produce peace, stability and reconciliation. It has produced the opposite. Those of us who live in Northern Ireland have seen the increased violence. Twice as many people died in the first four months of this year as died in the first four months last year, and that figure was an increase on the previous year. Those of us who have witnessed the economic and political instability and the greater division in our community recognise, even if the Government have not yet recognised, that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has not worked and will never work in Northern Ireland.

I am as angry and bitter 526 days after the signing of the agreement as I was when I first heard about it. I will never accept the Anglo-Irish Agreement, no matter what propaganda the Minister of State or his office might try to pour out. If the Government have the remotest concern or care for the lives of the people in Northern Ireland who are their responsibility, they should face up to the reality that their policy is not working, will not work and cannot stick in Northern Ireland. Once they realise that, Unionists in Northern Ireland will be prepared to work with the Government. There are Unionists in Northern Ireland who want a reasonable alternative to the agreement and there are Unionists in Northern Ireland who are prepared to work towards a replacement of that agreement. We will be willing to work with the Government and other parties to achieve that reasonable alternative replacement to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

I will conclude because I know that the Front Bench spokesmen want to reply. We were told that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was meant to be a balance. For the intrusion into the affairs of the United Kingdom, the Government were to receive a quid pro quo in the shape of extradition, cross-border security and the recognition of Northern Ireland status. Surely the Government must now realise that they have been conned. Surely, even if the Government do not want to admit it openly, they must recognise that they gave all and got nothing. Surely they must now be prepared to face that fact and prepare themselves for a new initiative in Northern Ireland which has the vital ingredient for success—the consent of the Unionist community.

There must be that consent, which unfortunately the Liberal party spokesman, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), was not prepared to consider. He concerned himself with the fact that the nationalist community might be alienated if the Anglo-Irish Agreement was done away with. He was not in the least concerned that the vast majority of the community in Northern Ireland are alienated. If the Government accept that that alienation will never be removed without an alternative to the agreement, perhaps we have moved one short step. However, I doubt it.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Everyone called by the Chair on the Opposition Benches had a better right to speak than I and I have no complaints about that. My point is that some of us would not like it to be thought in Northern Ireland that we are not interested. I want it registered for the record that we tried to speak and are concerned with these matters.

Mr. Speaker: At the beginning of the debate, I said that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wanted to take part. I am sorry that nine of them have not been able to do so.

9.24 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): In answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) whose speech I follow, may I say that it is a pleasure for us to see him in the House, as it is to see all those hon. Members from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: That is patronising.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), who seeks to intervene from a sedentary position, should know better than to suggest that I am patronising those who are here for the first time in 18 months.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that Labour Members have warmly welcomed him back and have consistently said over a period of time that the proper place for those hon. Members is in this Chamber, in the forum of the nation, and that their cause would be better heard within our islands if they were here to make it. The variety of interventions that we have heard tonight will assist the Unionists in their cause.

Mr. Maginnis *rose*——

Rev. Martin Smyth *rose——*

Mr. Bell: If the Unionists have such a belief in their cause that they should be, and are, part of the United Kingdom, they would have no hesitation in entering into competition with the nationalists in Northern Ireland who seek an Irish nationalism and an Irish dimension.

If I can begin again, we welcome back those hon. Members. We welcome the intervention of the hon. Member for Belfast, East. The peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, to which he referred, remains not only the dream, the hope and the aspiration of the Opposition, but the reality that we shall seek during the months ahead. Whatever the Prime Minister decides elsewhere on Monday, we are confident that, as a future Government, we shall govern Northern Ireland with competence, confidence and with possibly a better equilibrium than have the present Government.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley) made a lengthy speech earlier, in which there was one phrase that especially caught my attention, and that probably moved the House. He said that many of us have not put our hands on curly heads who would never see their fathers back. He was referring to those who had been assassinated by the IRA and by the other paramilitary organisations that have brought death and destruction to Northern Ireland. That phrase puts this debate into context. While we are able to discuss the issues of security and of the Anglo-Irish Agreement here, out there in the real world of Northern Ireland, people are losing their lives. The IRA was responsible not only for the assassination of Lord Justice Gibson, Lady Gibson and the police officers to whom the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) referred earlier, but regularly takes justice into its own hands in a series of knee cappings and in the rough justice that is odious to the House of Commons and to the British people.

My hon. Friends and I give a modest welcome to the proposals that the Secretary of State announced earlier. [SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS; "What proposals?"] As I understood those proposals—I shall repeat them for the benefit of some hon. Members on the Benches behind me—the Secretary of State said that the Ulster Defence Regiment will be increased by 150 posts, that there will be new dispositions in relation to part-time members of the UDR and that there will be further recruitment to the RUC. As I understood it, the Secretary of State did not give a figure for that recruitment. There will also be additional support, as requested, which will help combat, more directly, the present terrorist campaign, and there will be additional helicopter resources—*[Interruption.]* If I can refer again to the sedentary interventions made by hon. Members on the Benches behind me, I can well imagine the frustration of the hon. Members who have not been able to speak in the debate.

The Secretary of State referred to a new zonal order in the border area which, I imagine, is a first step in making that place safer for those who pass it. We hope that the creation of a control zone, to which the Secretary of State referred, will be extended to other areas, as he suggested, and that it will be part of the general tightening up of border security. However, in our view that cannot be enough. We shall look to see how co-operation develops with the Republic of Ireland during the next few weeks and months, to see whether it will result in better security on the border.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds for any discourtesy to him in my not being able to hear his full speech. However, I heard the salient points relating to the role of the RUC in ordinary policing, public order, counter-insurgency and the border. He referred to some acts in Northern Ireland which are as much a disgrace to our Northern Irish society as the acts of the IRA. According to the Chief Constable's report for 1986, there have been pernicious acts of intimidation, physical abuse, petrol bomb attacks on dwellings, criminal damage, arson attacks at places of religious worship and other turbulent acts of aggression directed against the nationalist community. The intimidation that we have seen can no more be the coinage of the realm than can the shootings and bombings of the IRA.

The hon. Gentleman referred to police families who were subjected to physical and verbal abuse and to the dilemma in which such families find themselves when their homes are attacked. The figure he did not give the House, but which I shall, is that there were a staggering 500 cases of such intimidation of police men and women and their families. That is not a credit to the Unionist community; however it may wish to express itself, and however it may wish to express its desire to remain part of the United Kingdom, intimidation is not of any great assistance.

Rev. Martin Smyth *rose——*

Mr. Bell: While we accept the marching season as part of the democratic right of people in Northern Ireland to express themselves and their desires, a severe strain is placed on the RUC as a consequence. That must hinder its attempts to limit the more serious difficulties in Northern Ireland which are caused by the IRA.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bell: I cannot give way. Limited time is available to me and it will not help if I give way now.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North and others referred to the attitude of the Government of the Republic of Ireland. That Government are as concerned about the activities of the IRA as are the people of the United Kingdom. They have every reason to be disturbed and perturbed by its activities since it is clear that the IRA stikes at the heart of the Republic and of democracy and is as anxious to overturn the Government of the Republic as it is to overturn the Government of Northern Ireland. Therefore, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the new Government of the Republic are as anxious as the Government of the United Kingdom to curtail violence in all its forms in Northern Ireland.

In his statement on the assassination of Lord Justice and Lady Gibson, the Taoiseach referred to cruelty, brutality and stupidity. It may be as well to place on record that the cost to the Irish Exchequer directly attributable to security in Northern Ireland was about IR£157 million in 1985. That represents more than 28 per cent. of security expenditure and is about four times per head of the population more than the equivalent cost to Britain.

Mr. Beggs: That is a load of blarney.

Mr. Bell: The blarney is left to the hon. Gentleman speaking from a sedentary position.

In recent months the Garda in the Republic have made several arrests and major arms finds. In January we saw a large haul of rockets, bomb-making equipment and explosives, and we saw two arrests in County Meath. In

[Mr. Bell]

December we saw a large haul of explosives and bomb-making equipment in County Cavan. We are as anxious as anyone for border co-operation to be improved and enhanced and so long as the Government remain we shall continue to urge enhancement and the making of full statements to the House.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill referred to the document which Sinn Fein issued recently called "A Scenario for Peace". We do not think that the document is a scenario for peace, but rather a scenario for war. In an article on 3 May, *The Sunday Tribune* called the document "rhetorical junk" and "anti-democratic claptrap". We associate ourselves with those views and say again, as we have said often in the past, that we do not propose to have any truck with Sinn Fein. We do not believe in the principle of the ballot paper in the one hand and the Armalite in the other. We again express to the House, to the country and to those who have ears to hear, our total and outright condemnation of the Sinn Fein and the IRA.

The hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneax), in a closely reasoned speech earlier this evening that was a pleasure to listen to, in contrast to the rhetoric we heard from other Unionist Members, referred to the speech I made to the Northern Ireland Assembly some 18 months ago relating to the status of the people of Northern Ireland. It might be as well to refer to the precise words I used in the debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I said:

"The status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom is not affected. But there is an obvious ambiguity in the status of the governance of its people."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1985; Vol 87, c. 960.]

The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) and the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) referred to a condominium over the affairs of Northern Ireland. I have often referred to the possibility of a consultative condominium through the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference. I said at the time that the Government probably ought to have made that ambiguity clearer to the people of Northern Ireland and sold harder the concept behind the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The first Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference on 22 April 1987 between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Mr. Brian Lenihan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic, shows that the Anglo-Irish Agreement remains actively in force notwithstanding the 18 months' boycott of this House by the right hon. and hon. Members from Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East referred to peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Those words were used by the Prime Minister when she introduced the Anglo-Irish Agreement and those words are as important today as they were at the time. We have heard a great deal about the Anglo-Irish Agreement and about security. While the Unionists are back in the House, it may well be that they will equally turn their attention to devolution. The future of Northern Ireland remains in their hands, as it always has over the past 18 months. The Anglo-Irish Agreement makes it clear that devolution is an avenue for them. They can return to their own Assembly if that is what they wish. They can return to systems of local government in Northern Ireland and they can return to systems——

Rev. Martin Smyth: The hon. Gentleman cannot continue to make such statements if he will not give way.

Mr. Bell: I give way.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman giving way. At times he does seem to have the wrong end of the stick. For example, on the media this morning he said that in Northern Ireland last year there were 2,000 parades against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Tonight he is misleading either himself or the House by suggesting that, with the Anglo-Irish Agreement in place, we can return to a devolved Government if we want. He knows that it is circumscribed and that even if there was a devolved Government, the Anglo-Irish Conference would still continue, with a greater input into the affairs of Northern Ireland than this House.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman did not deny that there were 2,000 marches against the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that there were additional marches in the marching season, most of which went off peacefully. Devolution goes to the heart of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I addressed the Northern Ireland Assembly 18 months ago and I made it very clear that the future of Northern Ireland was in the hands of its representatives. They could have had devolution and it is still available to them. the fact that they are back in the House for this important debate is an important step for democracy in Northern Ireland. That democracy can be further strengthened as time goes by and as they put their minds to forms of devolution that will give back to them the power to look after their own Northern Ireland in the way that they seek.

Sooner or later they must come to terms with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That agreement has the support not only of the Government who brought it about but of the opposition parties which in this debate have repeated their support for the agreement. The Anglo-Irish Agreement will be as intact after the next election as it is now. We hope that the presence of the Unionists in this debate is an indication of a little more forward thinking and a more positive approach in the interests of the 1·5 million people who live in Northern Ireland. They look to their leaders for leadership that will meet their aspirations and they look to them to defend their corner in relation to the United Kingdom in a way that meets those aspirations. We welcome this debate and the hon. Members who have taken part. As I said earlier, we give a modest welcome to the Government's proposals on security in Northern Ireland.

9.40 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We meet for this debate because of an upsurge in violence in Northern Ireland that has cost the lives of civilians, policemen, soldiers — including members of the UDR—and Northern Ireland's second most senior judge and his wife.

In expressing sympathy to those who have been bereaved and to those who have been injured in this upsurge in violence, I also clearly reiterate the determination and the will of the Government that those who are guilty of these outrages shall not succeed in their campaign.

In a not untypical contribution to the debates in this House, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley) made a particularly disgraceful reference to my

right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman accused my right hon. Friend of making no reference at all in his statement of 27 April to the death of an Ulster Defence Regiment soldier during this upsurge in violence. I refer the House to *Hansard* for that date. My right hon. Friend said:

"The House will be aware of the recent serious increase in the number of casualties which have been caused by terrorist actions. In the last week in particular, two members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, one Ulster Defence Regiment soldier and three civilians have been murdered. The civilian deaths were of the foreman of a building company, and most recently the murder of Lord Justice Gibson and Lady Gibson."—[*Official Report*, 27 April, 1987; Vol. 115, c. 21.]

[Interruption.] I hope that the hon. Member for Antrim, North will have the good grace to withdraw the allegation that he made about my right hon. Friend.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is quite clear from that debate that the Secretary of State referred to the death of Lord Justice Gibson as the most recent one. His death was not the most recent. The Minister of State should not lie to the House.

Mr. Scott: The record of *Hansard* is a direct contradiction of what was said by the hon. Gentleman for Antrim, North and I am saddened but not surprised that he should have behaved in this fashion.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. Let me make it clear to the House that when the Secretary of State took me up on a point I went and checked *Hansard*. I never said that which he attributed to me. Let him go up the stairs now and read it.

Rev. William McCrea: The Minister should withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has been a good-tempered debate and I hope that it will continue in that way.

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman checks *Hansard* for himself, he will see that what I have said is absolutely accurate and I hope that in due course he will withdraw.

I shall now turn to the questions that were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). They asked about the circumstances that led to the murder of the Gibson family. Inquiries are still proceeding into the precise circumstances, and I am sure that the House will understand if I do not go into the security arrangements that are made for the reception and transfer of people at border areas, especially when such people are under great threat.

The experience described to the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) may occur on occasion but it is certainly not an established pattern.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: It happened to me.

Mr. Scott: It may have happened to my hon. Friend, but I hope that he will understand that the security forces on both sides of the border are at pains to ensure that a particular pattern is not allowed to develop—for the protection of the security forces themselves and for those within their charge. There has been much loose talk——

Mr. Maginnis: Will the Minister clarify for the House, once and for all, the statement that he has just made to the effect that he has not yet completed investigations into the murder of Lord Justice and Lady Gibson? Will he then tell us why the Northern Ireland Office has allowed—indeed, encouraged—the idea that Lord Justice Gibson was somehow, through his own carelessness, responsible for his own death? Will the Minister please clarify that, and stop adding insult to injury on that matter, which was a tragedy to that family and to all the people of Ulster?

Mr. Scott: I have said nothing about that and nor has the Northern Ireland Office. The investigations into the murder of Sir Maurice and Lady Gibson are being conducted by the RUC; and when it has completed its investigation it will inform us of the outcome. Of course, in the aftermath of an incident such as this, the Chief Constable has instituted an inquiry into security procedures for all VIPs who are escorted in the Province, particularly for those crossing the border, and especially for judges. A detailed inquiry is being carried out into the circumstances of that brutal murder. When it has been completed, any lessons that may need to be learned will, of course, be applied by the RUC. I would hesitate to leap to the sort of judgment that others have made until that time.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) made a point that my hon. Friends and I have not infrequently made. In Northern Ireland, there is an interaction between the three elements of the economic, the security and the political positions. By definition, it is almost impossible to act on one of those elements, or to fail to act on one of them, without having an impact on the other two. I take that for granted. That means that there can be no purely security solution to the position in Northern Ireland—because we have to act on all three aspects that confront us.

I was interested and depressed to hear from the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West about his conversations with young people in Northern Ireland. In this instance, I agreed with the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) that those to whom the right hon. and learned Member spoke were not typical of young people in Northern Ireland today. Many of them spend a great deal of their time and energy on bridging the divides in Northern Ireland, and on seeking to find ways—through leisure and academic activities, and so on—to co-operate with one another, in the hope that they will build a better future.

Mr. Archer: I wish to make it clear that I wholly endorse the Minister's last sentence. I did not suggest that the majority of young people in Northern Ireland are of the frame of mind of those people that I mentioned. For the purposes of the argument, it is enough if a minority of them are.

Mr. Scott: I was anxious that the impression should not go out that the people to whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke were typical of young people in Northern Ireland. He also said that Ministers in Northern Ireland should listen to those in the local community. When I first became a Minister there, the tradition of open ministerial doors was borne in on me—of people being able to come in to see Ministers. I see that a former Minister in Stormont—the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor)—is in his place tonight. There is a tradition of Ministers being ready to receive deputations about matters that would never be raised with a Minister by members of the public here. Ministers in this Administration and in previous ones have sought to keep that tradition going in Northern Ireland. We are always

[Mr. Scott]

ready to listen and I am sad only that there are some in the Province who have been unwilling to come to put their views to us in recent months.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) made what conceivably could be his last speech in this place. I shall be sad if it turns out to be so. I have no knowledge of impending events other than that which is possessed by everyone else. My right hon. Friend has served in this place with great distinction for 33 years, including service on the Front Bench, in the Whips Office and as a member of the Cabinet. If he does not make another speech in this Chamber, I say as someone who is much his junior, that he can be proud of the contribution that he made to this debate, which was wise, statesmanlike and serious in tone. I am sure that we all wish my right hon. Friend well if it turns out to be his final speech. I hope especially that the appeal with which he ended it to the leaders of the Church and politics in Northern Ireland to play a constructive part in the future of Northern Ireland will not fall on deaf ears.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley spoke of the Anglo-Irish Agreement coming apart at the seams. Let me disappoint him by saying that nothing could be further from the truth. His description of the design and workings of the agreement bears no relation to reality. He and his hon. Friends have opted out of contact with the Government in Northern Ireland. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I know that solid progress has been made within the terms of the agreement, not least in the area of cross-border security co-operation, and we intend to contribute to it.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister give way? I wish to raise a matter that involves my constituents.

Mr. Scott: With respect, I shall not give way. I have given way a number of times already and the House knows that I always give way. I shall not do so on this occasion, however, because I have restricted my reply so as to allow other hon. Members to participate in the debate.

I have dealt already with one of the matters raised by the hon. Member for Antrim, North. He referred to remarks made by the Rev. Robert Dickinson, a former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland. It was clear from the meeting which my right hon. Friend had with the present leader of the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland earlier this week and from their remarks afterwards on television that they take a much more constructive view of affairs in Northern Ireland than does Dr. Dickinson. I find it especially offensive that Dr. Dickinson should have accused my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of being in some sort of conspiracy, and just as guilty as IRA members, when she was a victim of the IRA in the attack on the Grand hotel at Brighton. I hope that Dr. Dickinson will reconsider his remarks.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North found, of course, another confidential document to read out. He had a confidential document released to him after the last meeting of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference, and I read it with great care. I think that there were seven points in it, and in not one of them was there a scintilla of truth that reflected the reality of what happened at that conference. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was seeking deliberately to mislead, but I cannot believe that that would be true. On the other hand, he may have been sold a pup by someone outside and he decided to repeat the words that had been given to him.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred in an intervention to the allegations that again are current, and which were made by Messrs Wallace and Holroyd, about the conduct of the security forces in Northern Ireland. These are matters for the Defence Ministers. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces has already given a substantive reply on these matters. Defence Ministers assure us that these allegations have been fully and carefully investigated and that there is not a shred of evidence to substantiate any of them. I am satisfied.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds outlined the tasks that fall to the RUC these days. It carries out ordinary policing and responds to public order threats which, in my view, places an additional and unnecessary burden on it in the fight against terrorism. I know that the whole House pays tribute to the RUC for the work that it does in that area. My hon. Friend mentioned also—this was taken up by the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder)—the guarding, as he put it, of an international border, and suggested that it is a task that would be better carried out by the Army.

Not infrequently, the RUC will ask the Army to operate on the border. Those who cross the border regularly will find quite often that the first security force presence that they encounter is that of a member of the Army. This is under the control of the RUC and it is for it to judge the best use of resources that are available to it, whether members of the RUC or members of the Army, in the tasks that have to be undertaken. It would be bad if as a matter of principle rather than a flexible practice the RUC were seen to be driven away from the border of the United Kingdom. That would be playing into the IRA's hands. The flexible response used by the RUC is very much better.

I thought my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds was a little unfair in accusing my right hon. Friend and me of not being willing to consult members of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. He knows that if they wish to talk to me, he has just to pick up the telephone. I am prepared to talk to them, as is my right hon. Friend, if he is available, and to discuss proposals for legislation or any other matters. There is a distinction between us listening to them about general security matters, about which any deputation can talk to Ministers, and them seeking to involve Ministers in operational judgments and decisions, which must be made properly through the Royal Ulster Constabulary command to the Chief Constable and the normal management structures that exist for that purpose.

The hon. Gentleman for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) referred to the Waterside RUC station. There is no doubt —I have made it public on many occasions—that the IRA's campaign of intimidation against public contractors has had a significant effect on the police building programme, but most contracts are going ahead. With the assistance of the Royal Engineers, we are making substantial progress, and we are determined that this tactic will not succeed.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) referred to what I would call border sensitivity. Where security forces in both jurisdictions must operate right up against the border in pursuit of the

common enemy, we must be understanding and not overly sensitive about incursions. Deliberate incursions and invasions of the sovereignty of a country are another matter. We must be sensitive to the needs of the security forces in seeking to defeat the common enemy, if there are incursions from one side of the border to the other.

Let us come back to the fundamentals. Not for the first time are we experiencing a resurgence of violence in Northern Ireland. My right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne said that he had experienced that during his time as Secretary of State. I understand the frustration and anger of those who suffer, but the danger is that this House is driven into an emotional response and into taking action that it would not otherwise take. As the right hon. Member for Warley, West said, confronted with this situation we must apply our minds to the problem. The IRA is a dedicated, ruthless and cynical terrorist organisation, operating with no standards or rules. We must be equally professional, but we must not abandon the standards appropriate for a liberal democracy to protect itself against an onslaught by a terrorist organisation.

It is easy and understandable, but wrong, when things go well to imagine that we are on a winning streak that will last for ever. It is equally wrong, when things go badly, to imagine that the IRA is winning. I do not believe for one moment that it is. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his opening speech that, measured against any of the targets which a terrorist organisation sets, the judgment must be that the IRA is not winning the campaign. It is able to sustain it for the moment, but it is not undermining the RUC, defeating the British Army or breaking the will of the House or the people of this country. I believe that our security strategy is right and should be pursued but, of course, we and the security forces will be anxious to consider any new tactics employed by the IRA and will be ready to take the steps necessary to defeat it.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the House do now adjourn:—

The House divided: Ayes 13, Noes 121.

Division No. 157] **[10 pm**

AYES

Beggs, Roy
Cranborne, Viscount
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Killedder, James A.
McCusker, Harold
Maginnis, Ken
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. William Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cash, William
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert
Hirst, Michael
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howells, Geraint
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Matthew
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Northern Ireland (Police)

10.11 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are about to debate one of the two items of legislation that ought to have been brought before the House as Bills rather than by Order in Council. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has a clear idea of the changes that would be required to put the RUC on the same footing as its counterparts in Great Britain, but the Government have deprived the House of any opportunity to debate separately, vote on and remove those offensive variations. For that reason, with great regret, we have to regard participation in this debate as a mere sham. Anything that we might say in the course of the debate would not alter one comma of the order. For that reason, we shall confine ourselves to voting against the motion at the end.

10.12 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the draft Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 16th December, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to introduce new procedures for dealing with complaints against the RUC which are broadly in line with those which apply in England and Wales, but supplemented by additional measures which take account of the particular sensitivities of policing in Northern Ireland.

In considering these measures, the House will recognise that the members of the RUC, with commendable spirit and dedication, continue to carry out their duties in a professional and impartial manner, and in a way that demonstrates their commitment to the maintenance of law and order and to the defeat of terrorism. They have also shown tremendous courage in the face of a vicious and continuing terrorist campaign. So far this year nine policemen have been murdered; the whole community owes them an immeasurable debt of gratitude, as it does to all the men and women of the RUC, particularly those who have lost their lives over the past 16 years. Of course, the House sympathises most sincerely with their families. The RUC is, and will remain, the linchpin of the Government's law and order and security policies.

However, the difficult circumstances of policing in Northern Ireland, the pressures faced by the RUC and the varying degrees of community tension, combine to strike at the basis of the relationship between the police and the public. As a result, there are many occasions on which that relationship faces greater strain than it would under more normal circumstances. Where that leads to disputes or disagreement, and where the conduct of police officers gives rise to legitimate cause for complaint, I believe it is vital, in the interests of all concerned, that complaints are properly investigated—and seen to be so—in a way with which both the police and the public can be satisfied.

Those of us who recall the debates about police complaints procedures that took place in this House during the passage of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 will no doubt also recall the principles upon which the complaints system for England and Wales is based, but I think that it would be appropriate at this stage briefly to remind the House of those principles, because they apply equally to the system that is to be introduced in Northern Ireland.

The Government remain convinced that the best way to deal with complaints against the police is through a procedure that can command support from the public and in which the police can have confidence. Above all, the procedure must not only be effective; it must be accountable. By that I mean that, while the responsibility for carrying out complaints investigations must remain with the police whose experience and training best fit them for the task, the conduct of the investigations must be subject to the control and direction of a public body, with effective and extensive supervisory powers, that is independent of both the police and the Government.

I believe that the procedure for handling complaints that is contained in this order and that is based on these principles will make a substantial contribution towards the development of effective policing in Northern Ireland. It will provide reassurance to the public that the investigation of complaints will be both thorough and effective; it will help to strengthen police morale by being impartial and fair; and, perhaps most important of all, I believe that it can enhance the relationship between the police and the public by helping to foster a climate of mutual co-operation in which the police can become better placed to serve and protect the interests of the whole community.

I turn now to the detailed provisions of the order, which are couched in terms with which Members of this House will already be familiar. However, while the proposed system for Northern Ireland closely resembles that which operates in England and Wales, it contains additional provisions that I will mention as they arise.

Article 2 deals with interpretation, and in particular provides that the order is to apply to the regular RUC, full-time members of the RUC reserve and, unlike the current arrangements, to the part-time RUC members as well. In Northern Ireland, the part-time reservists carry out a wide range of operational duties in support of the regular force. Indeed, the general public and terrorist organisations do not usually distinguish between one category of member and another. Therefore, I believe it right that all members of the RUC and its reserve should come within the scope of the new arrangements.

In line with the provisions in England and Wales, the order adopts the concept of "appropriate authority", which in Northern Ireland will be either the police authority or the Chief Constable, but it departs from the British procedures by allowing a complaint to be made by a third party on behalf of a member of the public without the complainant's written consent. Of course, the third party should have the complainant's verbal consent, but since the police will wish to interview the complainant himself early in the investigation they can test the veracity of his complaint at that time and need not proceed with the case if the complainant does not wish to substantiate it.

That is the current position in Northern Ireland, and the police, together with a number of interested parties who responded to our proposals are content to let it stand. Given that the police in England and Wales have been given discretion to act upon a complaint without checking whether or not the third party has obtained the complainant's written consent, I firmly believe that, on balance, it is more important for complaints to be recorded

and investigated promptly rather than to protect the interests of a third party who might register a complaint on another's behalf.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, when the question of allowing an aggrieved person to have a complaint made on his behalf without his written consent was considered by the Standing Committee on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, the Committee threw it out and that it is no longer part of the Act governing the police in England and Wales? Will he also confirm that thereby he is making an exception and departing from something that this House considered and rejected in respect of all other police forces?

Mr. Scott: I respond in two ways. First, the existing procedure in Northern Ireland is operated perfectly satisfactorily by the RUC. Secondly, Home Office guidance to the British forces specifically states:

"Discretion should be exercised before asking a third party for evidence of the original complainant's written consent to his passing on a complaint. In particular, where a solicitor indicates in forwarding a complaint that he is doing so on instructions from a client, the complaint should be treated without challenge as having been made by the client direct to the chief officer."

That is specific, and I repeat the first sentence:

"Discretion should be exercised before asking a third party for evidence of the original complainant's written consent to his passing on a complaint."

Of course, we consulted the RUC about this matter because we knew that it had been discussed in the House, and as a result the Deputy Chief Constable indicated that he agreed with our assessment of the current position. We consulted him in the following terms:

"In the light of various comments received on the Consultative paper, it has been concluded that the proposed requirement for written authorisation when making a complaint on behalf of another would be widely perceived as a retrograde step. No written consent is required at present in such circumstances and there is no evidence to suggest that this requirement would substantially reduce the number of malicious and frivolous complaints. The disadvantages in adding this requirement to the present system could well outweigh any hoped for advantages."

The Deputy Chief Constable agreed with our assessment of the current position and our intention to retain it. We were therefore right to introduce this modest difference in practice between what happens in Northern Ireland and in England and Wales.

Article 3 establishes the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland and abolishes the Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland and schedule 1 provides for the constitution, membership and administration of the commission.

Article 4 outlines the preliminary steps to be taken by the Chief Constable on receipt of a complaint and is in line with the procedures that apply in England and Wales. Article 5, which sets out the procedure for investigating complaints about the conduct of an officer of the rank of chief superintendent or below, is again in line with the procedures that exist here. However, because the order can apply only to the RUC, it cannot include a provision requiring a chief officer of another United Kingdom police force to comply with a request from the Chief Constable of the RUC to provide an officer to conduct a formal investigation. Nevertheless, since Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary has undertaken to arrange for the provision of investigating officers, in response to requests from the Chief Constable, I am confident that such appointments will be made as and when necessary.

Article 6 deals with the investigation of complaints against senior officers and, once again, is in line with the provisions that exist here. The "appropriate authority" for senior officers is the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

Article 7 deals with the reference of complaints to the commission. Here we have supplemented the Great Britain procedures by providing that all complaints that require formal investigation must be referred to the commission within a period to be specified in regulations. The commission will therefore be able to exercise, at an early stage, its obligatory or discretionary powers of supervision. In addition, regulations will provide that copies of all complaints that have been resolved informally will be sent to the commission so that it will have a full and complete picture of the entire complaints process.

Article 8 deals with the reference of other matters to the commission — in particular, its involvement in "public interest" matters. Perhaps it would help the House if I explained these provisions and the purpose behind them in some detail. Article 8(1) allows the appropriate authority — either the Police Authority for Northern Ireland or the Chief Constables to refer a non-complaint matter to the commission if it considers that it ought to be referred because of its gravity or exceptional circumstances. Such matters will not be the subject of a specific complaint, but might concern allegations about the conduct of police officers coming to light through reports in the media, or as a result of internal police disciplinary inquiries. The provision is completely in line with that applying in England and Wales and gives the commission power to decide whether it should supervise the investigation. The benefits of this system have been highlighted by the Police Complaints Authority in Great Britain, which, in its first report, noted that on 72 occasions chief constables had invited it to supervise the investigation of matters into which the police themselves had initiated inquiries though under no obligation to refer them to the Police Complaints' Authority in the first instance.

However, article 8(2) is an important supplement to those powers and does not apply in England and Wales. It gives the Secretary of State, or the Police Authority, power to refer a non-complaint matter to the commission if they believe it is desirable in the public interest that the commission should supervise the investigation.

Again, the alleged misconduct of an officer will not be the subject of a formal complaint but may have occurred in circumstances which have aroused widespread public disquiet, sufficient to warrant the commission's involvement. But, unlike the previous provision, judgment about the seriousness of the matter and an assessment of the need to safeguard the interests of the public will rest with either the Secretary of State or the Police Authority and after consultation with the Chief Constable. The power will not be used solely in response to media pressure, and I would expect that even in the face of such pressure many cases would not warrant the use of the power. Good judgment will be essential and decisions to refer the matter to the commission will be taken only in the most exceptional cases and after a careful assessment of those factors which, in terms of seriousness or "public interest", not only warrant the commission's obligatory involvement but set

[Mr. Scott]

the matter apart from those non-complaint cases which the Chief Constable would ordinarily have been expected to refer under article 8(1) and where the commission's involvement would have been discretionary.

The combined effect of the powers given by this article, together with those given to the commission by article 9 will, in my view, provide a much more effective alternative to the existing power given to the Chief Constable and the Police Authority by section 13 of the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970. That provides for the Chief Constable, at his own discretion, or at the direction of the Police Authority, to refer a specific complaint, affecting or appearing to affect the public interest, to a tribunal for consideration. However, the powers to convene a tribunal have been used only once, and the tribunal proved totally inadequate as a means of investigating a specific complaint. It had no power to subpoena witnesses, take evidence on oath or call for the production of documentary evidence, and was therefore unable to obtain evidence which would warrant criminal or disciplinary proceedings against the police officers concerned.

It was clear, therefore, that there was an overriding need to protect the interests of the public in complaint and, indeed, non-complaint matters. During the consultation period which followed publication of the proposals for reform the Government were urged to retain the section 13 tribunal and to strengthen its powers by providing that it could subpoena witnesses, call for the production of documentary evidence and take evidence on oath.

However, the Government rejected this course of action for two principal reasons. First, even in a strengthened form the section 13 tribunal would have remained no more than an inquisitorial tribunal which, to get at the truth, would have had to grant witnesses immunity from prosecution. Its findings would have been unlikely to have resulted in the prosecution of individual officers and its value as a means of reassuring the public would have been minimal.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the Government took the view that the credibility and public standing of the new commission would be seriously undermined if more than one body was given powers in relation to complaints investigations. That is why those powers have been concentrated in the hands of the commission, which will be able to apply its extensive and effective surpervisory powers to the investigation of both formal complaints and non-complaints matters. I believe that these measures will serve to increase the effectiveness of police investigations into complaints and will, in turn, provide a greater opportunity not only to reassure the public that the truth has been discovered but to ensure that police officers who commit disciplinary or criminal offences will more readily be brought to book.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Would an inquiry such as the Stalker inquiry be necessary in the future, or would the commission undertake that work if such a situation arose?

Mr. Scott: It is impossible to speculate about that, but I believe that in matters where general public concern is being expressed in Northern Ireland this would be one way of dealing with those matters, and perhaps the most effective way of dealing with them quickly and effectively. However, in the particular circumstances of any case it would be for the Government of the day to decide what action they thought was most appropriate.

Article 9 deals with the supervision of investigations by the commission and specifies the types of case in which the commission must exercise its supervisory powers and those in which it may do so at its discretion. The supervisory powers given to the commission are in line with those given to the Police Complaints Authority in England and Wales. The commission will be able to approve or disapprove the choice of investigating officer even when one has already been appointed. It will be able to keep in close touch with the investigation throughout its course. It may require the Chief Constable to provide additional resources to the investigation and, finally, it will be required to issue a statement saying whether it was satisfied with the conduct of the investigation. These powers are exactly the same as those given to the PCA here.

Article 10 specifies the steps that are to be taken after the investigation; and, again, the procedures are fully in line with those which exist here. As regards senior officers, the Police Authority has a duty to refer the report of an investigation to the Director of Public Prosecution, except where it is satisfied that no criminal offence has been committed. As in England and Wales, the power of the Chief Constable to decide whether a member should be charged will relate only to minor criminal offences. However, there is a safeguard in this to which I will refer in a moment.

Article 11 outlines the steps that are to be taken where the accused has admitted the charges. Article 12 deals with the powers of the commission to direct reference of reports to the DPP. Both are in line with the procedures adopted for England and Wales, the latter providing the safeguard which I mentioned earlier, where, if the Chief Constable decides that a member should not be charged with a minor criminal offence, the commission may overturn his decision and direct him to refer the matter to the DPP.

Articles 13 to 17 are in line with the arrangements for England and Wales and I will not go into them here.

Part III of the order begins with article 20, which amends section 26 of the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 and provides powers to make discipline regulations for reserve constables. The Secretary of State already has powers under section 25 of the Police Act 1970 to make regulations governing disciplinary matters for the regular force and, therefore, the existing regulations will be amended to take account of the changes which have been adopted in England and Wales. The amendments will cover the procedures of disciplinary hearings and of appeals from such hearings, and will provide that punishment by dismissal, requirement to resign or reduction in rank will not be imposed on an officer of chief superintendent or below unless he has been afforded the opportunity to be legally represented. In addition, the appeals procedures will be statutorily regulated in line with Great Britain.

Since it is our intention to revise the discipline regulations, we have given careful consideration to the issue of discriminatory behaviour. As the House will recall, discrimination on the grounds of racial origin has been made a specific disciplinary offence in England and Wales. We thought it appropriate to introduce a similar offence in Northern Ireland, but that it should be broadened to take account of religious belief and political opinion. We

addressed this issue in line with the extensive anti-discrimination measures which have applied across the board since the Northern Ireland Constitution Act was passed in 1973. This made it unlawful for all Northern Ireland Government Departments, any local body, a range of authorities, boards and public bodies to discriminate on religious or political grounds. In effect, therefore, rather than singling out the police, we are seeking to ensure that in the exercise of their duties the police are subject to the same constraints as the members and staff of other public service organisations in Northern Ireland. However, in response to representations from the Police Federation, we have agreed to give further thought to the wording of this offence and will consider it again when drafting the regulations in question.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I should like to get one matter clear. My hon. Friend is saying that it is part of the public law that all other civil servants in Northern Ireland should not discriminate. Of course, that is true. However, that law applies equally to the police no more and no less than to any other public servant. Why does my hon. Friend think that that should be extended, uniquely in the case of the police, in their discipline regulations?

Mr. Scott: Parliament, having decided on its approach to matters on this side of the water, decided to make discrimination on the gound of racial origin a specific disciplinary offence. Public opinion in Northern Ireland would have found it surprising if, in the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, we did not include a similar offence in terms of religious or political discrimination which are more relevant to the situation in Northern Ireland. However, in response to representations from the Police Federation, we have agreed to give further thought to the wording of the offence and we will consider it again when drafting the regulations. There will be every opportunity for the Police Federation, and other interested bodies, to be involved in the consultative process on those regulations.

Article 21 of this order follows the procedures adopted in England and Wales and gives the constituent sections of the Police Association — which includes the Police Federation — specific representative rights at disciplinary proceedings, or on an appeal from such proceedings. Again, in line with the provisions that exist here, article 22 prevents a member who has been charged and either acquitted or convicted of a criminal offence from being charged with a disciplinary offence which is in substance the same. It also provides that no statement in the course of informal resolution of a complaint may be admissible in subsequent criminal, civil or disciplinary proceedings unless it consists of, or includes, an admission relating to a matter that falls to be resolved informally.

Article 23 follows the procedures adopted here by providing for the Secretary of State to issue guidance to the Chief Constable about the discharge of his functions under this order and otherwise in connection with discipline. It also requires the commission to have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State on matters affecting the preferring or withdrawing of disciplinary charges. The guidance we intend to issue will be similar to that issued by the Home Office.

Article 24 deals with the constitution and proceedings of the Police Association and allows the Secretary of State, after consultation with the association, to make regulations enabling the association or any of its sections, which includes the Police Federation, to make rules regarding its constitution and proceedings. Again, that is in line with the provisions that exist in England and Wales and follows the recommendations of Sir Edmund Davies in this respect.

Article 25 allows the Chief Constable to investigate complaints against traffic wardens and for the Police Authority to deal with such complaints. Articles 26 and 27 set out the various amendments and repeals. Schedule 1 deals with the constitution and membership of the new commission and schedule 2 with repeals.

In bringing forward this legislation, I am conscious of the considerable measure of support for the RUC which already exists within the law-abiding community in Northern Ireland, and that the RUC, by upholding the law in an impartial but effective manner, continues to strengthen its acceptability throughout the community. However, attitudes to policing, which have at times been coloured by events of the immediate or distant past, continue to be influenced by those who, for political purposes, would seek to create and exploit divisions in the community by bringing a political dimension to policing where none exists; and by lawless elements who wish to diminish and undermine the effectiveness of the RUC to create an unstable environment in which their own brand of subversion might flourish. Against that background, it is important for the whole community in Northern Ireland, and not least for the police themselves, for support for the police to be developed and strengthened in a responsive and positive manner.

However, it is also important to recognise that an effective procedure for handling complaints against the RUC will not, of itself, cure all the real or imagined ills that affect the relationship between the police and the public, and that no matter how effective the police investigation may be, nor how closely supervised, it must nevertheless operate within the constraints of the ordinary criminal law. Police officers suspected of committing criminal or disciplinary offences must have the same rights and privileges as members of the general public who may be suspected of breaking the law. As the Police Complaints Authority in England and Wales stated in its first report:

> "No one is the less a citizen for being a policeman and every police officer is entitled to a citizen's rights. These include being presumed innocent of crime or indiscipline until the contrary is proved. The standard of proof prescribed by law is the same for both criminal and disciplinary charges; they must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt".

Nevertheless, every citizen has a right to expect that those whose duty it is to uphold the law will do so in a way that reflects the considerable trust and responsibility that is placed upon them. While the vast majority of police officers already fulfil that expectation, those whose behaviour gives rise to legitimate cause for complaint must expect their conduct to be thoroughly but fairly investigated in order that appropriate remedial action can be taken. That is in the wider interest of the force itself. I firmly believe that these measures strike the correct balance between the need to protect the interests of the public and the need to safeguard the rights of the police, and I commend them to the House.

10.39 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): In response to the Minister's comments about the order, I should like to say first that I agree absolutely with him that where

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there is a divided community, such as we have in Northern Ireland, where there is a problem with policing, if only people would face up to it, and where there is a historical dimension to that problem, it is essential from the policing and public points of view that there is a complaints procedure that will stand up to scrutiny and that will be seen by the entire community to be effective, fair and just. It should be effective, fair and just not only to the complainant, but to the person against whom the complaint is made.

I should like to preface my remarks by saying that I should not like my comments on this—I want to make several points—to be construed, in any way, as police bashing. They are certainly not that. Nor should I like them to be seen as a way of providing ourselves with the machinery for witch hunts. I certainly do not want that because I know how counter-productive that can be. I have seen it over the years. However, I have also seen the way in which a proper means to process complaints can eat into the attitude that exists in a community, which eventually will come to see policing as a problem—not in a political context, but in that of a divided community, where policing is essential for a stable and just society. That is the end towards which we must work, and this is one of the means of doing so.

I have criticisms of this procedure, but I shall not dwell on them for too long, because many of them are self-evident. First, I am neither happy nor convinced that the proper machinery for a police complaints procedure involves the investigation being performed by the police. It is essential, especially with the tensions and divisions that exist in the north of Ireland, to have an independent investigative body. That body should be independent of the police if it is to make the sort of investigations which, of necessity, must be made in most cases. At the end of the procedure, it must at least be said that there was an independent investigation. We should not have clouds hanging it over as has happened in the past, when the accusation has been made immediately, "How can one expect justice when the police are investigating the police?" That would be a fundamental flaw.

This order would be good for a normal society and it would certainly be an advance on the complaints procedure that exists. However, in a divided society and in one that has the problems of the north of Ireland, the order has a crucial and fundamental omission and one that, in the last analysis, will have a detrimental effect on the working of the entire procedure. It is a mistake to have eliminated altogether the section 13 tribunal, to which the Minister referred. A section 13 tribunal with judicial powers could cope with many of the problems much more satisfactorily, from a public point of view. However, it would also have the teeth and the ability to deal with certain circumstances affecting the public interest. I have my doubts about whether the new procedure will do that.

I should like to make a brief point about the means of making complaints. The first and obvious point relates to the place where the complaint is made. It may seem basic, but the vast majority of the complaints that are made against the police are made by people who are dealing with a reasonably small issue, not with the type of issue that will hit the headlines, not the Samuel Devenney type of issue or the John Stalker type of issue. It is a small issue which may revolve round personality clashes or something much more serious. But that person must go into a police station to make the complaint and I remind the House that police stations in Northern Ireland are not what they are here. In most circumstances they are almost fortified camps. The person is invariably young or from the other side of the tracks and he must enter what he will regard as an alien environment. He is then expected to place his hope and trust in the complaints procedure.

I have gone with young people to police stations to make complaints and it is no joke for such young people to go into an interrogation room and make a complaint. That does not lend itself to confidence in the process or begin to help a young person have confidence in the procedure. I ask the Minister to look into that as it is crucially important in making the complaint.

The Minister referred to complaints being made through a third party—either a public representative or a clergyman or solicitor. Unfortunately, the order implies that a complaint can be made only to the police. That is not written into the order, but is tucked away in the explanatory document on page four, section 16. A third party complaint system should be included in the order because it is crucial, especially in the north of Ireland where it is important that someone besides the aggrieved person can make a complaint.

In its letter to hon. Members the Police Federation for Northern Ireland states that a third-party complaint system is

"probably the ultimate in mischievous busy-bodying."

I believe that it will work in the opposite direction. A responsible person advising an aggrieved person will at least be able to evaluate the position and may make a direct contact with the police outside the complaints procedure and iron out the problem. Therefore, far from being busy-bodying, the involvement of a third party may be a positive step and could greatly benefit all concerned.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument. Does he agree that the aggrieved party would have to consent to the intervention of the third party, whether a clergyman or some such person? How does he propose that that consent should be demonstrated—in writing or merely orally?

Mr. Mallon: Page four of the explanatory document does not require that consent, and for good reason. Often people coming to my clinics to complain say, "I do not want an official complaint because if I submit one, they will lean on me."

Sir Eldon Griffiths: That is the aggrieved person?

Mr. Mallon: Yes. A person wanting to make a complaint to the authorities feels vulnerable. I have seen that. Young people are especially vulnerable when they take complaints themselves. But if the complaint is made through a third person the aggrieved person's position is safeguarded.

I am not convinced that the Chief Constable should have such wide powers. Essentially, it is the Chief Constable who will decide how the complaint is to be processed. There is always a subjective element in human relationships and that subjective element could be to the disadvantage of the police officer or of the complainant. However, I have grave reservations about that.

I note that the new commission will have the power to investigate any complaint that it decides to investigate. I would like to see this amended because it seems to give an

inordinate power to the Chief Constable, both in relation to complaints made against men in his force and in relation to the public.

The crucial element of the whole procedure is the supervisory powers. It is crucial that those supervisory powers are there. Having said that, I would like to see an independent body for investigative purposes, if there is not to be one the extensive powers to supervise and investigative complaints must exist. It must be supervision in the broadest sense of the word. It must not be a passive type of supervision. It must be supervision in a very active sense.

Members of the commission must be at liberty to monitor at close hand every stage of the investigation, to intervene if they see fit, and to direct the course which an investigation should take. There should be no bureaucratic or other obstacles placed in their path. Public confidence in the impartiality and effectiveness of the new procedure will suffer from any perception that the new commission has been prevented from carrying out its statutory role. People in the north of Ireland, from whatever part of society they come, will not take this new procedure seriously unless they are satisfied that it and the new commission will be empowered to scrutinise investigations in a way that has not existed before.

I am glad that some of the commission's powers are specified. Articles 9(5) and 9(6) empower the commission to approve or veto the appointment of an investigating officer. Subject to regulations made by the Secretary of State, it may impose requirements in respect of an investigation. However, while those two articles are welcome, the order is silent on the specifics of the supervisory role open to the commission. There is much to be said for allowing the commission to adopt its own flexibility and to create its own means of operation. But it would be undesirable if, in the absence of specific detail in this order, it was used later to attempt to justify attempted limitations of the commission's role.

I note the report of the British Police Complaints Authority and the implications made in it. I also note the scope of the investigations. I simply ask the Minister to confirm that an officer of the new complaints commission in the north of Ireland will have the same powers to accompany an investigating officer to interviews and to the scene of incidents and to attend interviews of the investigating officer with complainants and with other witnesses? The answer to that is either yes or no, but it is crucially important.

Will an officer of the commission be able to discuss with the investigating officer the plan of the investigation and to advise on the general lines of the inquiry? Will the officer be able to arrange that statements taken from witnesses or evidence collected are submitted for scrutiny? Will the officer be able to insist that the investigating officer will submit interim reports to the commission and to him? Will the officer be free to decide that witnesses should be reinterviewed or that witnesses who have not previously been interviewed by the officer charged with the investigation should be interviewed? Will the officer be free to decide what evidence should be collected that has not previously been collected or that a line of inquiry should be pursued that has not previously been pursued? Those are specific questions that arise directly from the report of the Police Complaints Board in Britain. We must have specific answers to those questions because they are crucial to confidence in this procedure and its workings.

When this order has been discussed and adopted, I hope that the community in the North of Ireland will have a clear and unequivocal statement of support for the new procedures from the chief constable of the RUC and from the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. I have always maintained that the resolution of the problem of policing and all its attendant problems depends on an honesty and a realism that are not just one-sided. Honesty and realism must apply across the board. The proposals in the order have no chance of working unless we get such an unequivocal statement from the chief constable of the RUC and the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. I ask them specifically when this order comes into effect to give such an unequivocal guarantee of support.

10.56 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I approach this order with feelings that are very close to despair. Throughout the debate and in their opening speeches my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office spoke about the need to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary. They paid tribute to the courage of the force and recognised the difficulties of the task in which it is engaged.

To put it plainly, the order is a kick in the teeth to the ordinary men and women in the Northern Ireland police service. They deeply resent it. Ministers have met me and the Police Federation for Northern Ireland on a number of occasions and we have exchanged inordinate numbers of letters. Throughout the months of long negotiations to which I have been a party, not by one comma or one scintilla have the Government sought to meet the genuine concerns expressed to them by the federation on behalf of the men and women of the force. The Government have been totally obdurate and their obduracy is deeply resented.

I have been involved in the matter of complaints against the police for a very long time. The legislation that touches upon it has been debated in the House on innumerable occasions. I do not wish to go over what happened in the distant past, but I must say that with some notable exceptions hon. Members representing Irish constituencies who took part in the earlier debate and who have decided on their own best judgment not to take part in this debate have a good point.

This order ought to be brought before the House as a Bill. There ought to be a Standing Committee to examine all the clauses in the Bill and to debate them and vote on each point. That Standing Committee should be able to examine those areas of the order that materially depart from the legislation agreed by the House for England and Wales.

This order is offensive in that, in significant ways, it changes the arrangements for the police in Northern Ireland in a fashion that the House rejected when it was sought to apply them to the police in England and Wales. No one knows that better than the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell).

The Police Federation of Northern Ireland wants the arrangements that affect its discipline and complaints procedures to be, as far as possible, analogous to those that apply to the other police forces in England, Wales and Scotland. That is as it should be. We expect the police in

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Northern Ireland to behave as a British police force should—impartially, and without regard to sectional interests. Broadly speaking, that is what they are doing.

Yet the Government are seeking to apply arrangements to the police forces of Northern Ireland that are different from those that the House is willing to accept for England and Wales. There should have been a Bill and Standing Committee, and the House should have been allowed to debate and vote on those matters in which the Government are departing from the legislation on which the order was founded.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I do not intend to make a speech, but I share the hon. Gentleman's high regard for the RUC. I understand the depth of feeling with which we approach the subject. I have received a letter from the Police Federation for Northern Ireland, which raised three specific points; two of them have been satisfactorily answered by the Minister.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman, not untypically, is not in the picture. My hon. Friend the Minister has been helpful in saying that he is again considering whether to introduce a discipline regulation on the grounds of political or religious discrimination, but that is not contained in the order. That would have to be brought forward separately, as a separate change in the discipline regulations.

If the hon. Gentleman had done his homework, he would have known that his intervention was wrong-headed. He does not know what he is talking about. The matter that he has raised is not in the order.

Mr. Ross: That was the first complaint from the Police Federation, but three items were listed.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: That may be. The hon. Gentleman has been good enough to read the Police Federation's representations on that point, but he is mistaken. We are not debating that point; we shall debate it on another occasion.

I rest my case on the procedural point. It is wholly wrong for the House to be asked to take or leave an order of this type, parts of which clearly deviate from matters to which the House has agreed elsewhere. We have no choice: either we vote for the whole order, or we vote against it. I find that difficult, because I support some aspects of the order, and want to reject others. But because of this procedure, I have no opportunity to do so.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Is the hon. Gentleman sure that we shall have an opportunity to debate the regulations?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am by no means certain of that, but I live in hope. It would be perfectly scandalous if the Government tried to introduce a new regulation based on political and religious discrimination, which would be a major departure from police discipline regulations in the rest of the country, and tried to get it through without a debate or vote. That would be monstrous. I hope that the Opposition will ensure that that does not happen.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The hon. Gentleman is right to state that the Secretary of State is not obliged to bring those regulations to the House. It might be appropriate for the Minister of State to say that he will do so.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am almost taking that for granted. As the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) raised the subject, I must say that the fundamental reason why it would be wrong to introduce into the discipline regulations of the police in Northern Ireland the notion that political discrimination shall henceforth be a discipline offence is that that would introduce politics into policing for the first time. It is clearly part of the present law, of the oath of office taken by every police officer, and of the present discipline code, that such officers should not discriminate on any grounds.

If we now introduce the adjectival type of discrimination that is called political, the inevitable consequence will be a demand for its introduction on this side of the water, too. For example, during incidents such as the miners' strike and the Wapping dispute, people would jump up and down and say that the police were using political discrimination because they had acted in a particular way towards one group or another. To try to police impartially on that basis would be nonsense. The Government are wrong-headed in this instance, and it is all part of their overall approach to the order. I apologise if I have wandered slightly from the substance of the debate.

When the issues that we are considering were first raised, I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I did so as far back as October 1986, when I pressed upon him three main principles. First, I stressed the desirability in the order that would be made to release the federation as far as possible from the leading strings of the association. The association is dealt with in a couple of places in the order. I regret to say that my right hon. Friend has failed to do that. He has done a number of things that are objectionable to the police but he has failed to do that which they requested of him. For as long as the association is in place, there is no way in which the federation, which is a constituent part of it, will be able to run its own affairs. It will not be placed in the same position as the Police Federation for England and Wales. The opportunity that was provided by the order should not have been missed.

Secondly, I asked in my letter that there should be opportunities for the federation on occasion to deal directly with the Secretary of State. That is what happens on this side of the water. The opportunity has not been taken in the order to free the federation in Northern Ireland from the association, thereby enabling it to have the access that is enjoyed on this side of the water.

Mr. Scott: Article 24 deals with the constitution and proceedings of the association. It enables the association or any of its sections—that includes the federation as an individual body—to make rules

"relating to its constitution and proceedings".

That is exactly in line with the procedures that apply in England and Wales. As for access to Ministers, my hon. Friend knows that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are always ready to meet the federation.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: My hon. Friend continues to use that bromide. In the preceding debate I referred to a number of specific recommendations that the federation made in respect of body armour and helicopters, for example. My hon. Friend knew nothing about them and he did not refer to them in his reply. My hon. Friend does not become involved in real discussions with the federation. Instead, he goes through a stately pavan in which he appears to listen, but he takes no action. His sort

of consultation amounts only to that. It is exactly the same as that of the Chief Constable, who had the effrontery to say recently that he did not consult the federation before making a gagging order on the chairman because he knew that it would not agree. That is his sort of consultation, and it is similar to that of my hon. Friend.

I shall turn to some of the provisions in the order that cause great offence. The allowing of complaints to be founded against police officers on behalf of third parties without the written consent of those parties is an issue that was debated carefully by the Committee which considered the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, as it then was. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), who will speak from the Opposition Front Bench, will recall the debates that took place in Committee.

The Committee came to the conclusion that it would be unjust to a police officer to allow any third party who wished to move in on the act—a busybody, a prattler, a meddler—to pick up someone's alleged complaint and run it through the machinery of the police system without at least ensuring that the aggrieved person was sufficiently serious about his complaint at least to sign his name or make his X on a document authorising the third party to complain on his behalf. That elementary justice impressed both sides of the Committee, and I was grateful to Labour Members as well as to my Conservative colleagues for making the case and convincing my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The existing provision was washed out of the Bill before the measure, which applied to England and Wales, was enacted yet this is to be introduced in Northern Ireland.

My hon. Friend suggests that it is just a minor change. It is a fundamental change, because it will allow any third party who wishes to make a name for himself in the press, to show his community that he is vigorous on their behalf, to pick up any tittle-tattle, or a malicious or frivolous complaint that might have been made in the heat of the moment and then withdrawn. He can run that complaint on behalf of somebody else, even though that other party has, on cool reflection, decided not to pursue the complaint. The Police Complaints Board has found that approximately 70 per cent. of complaints made against police are withdrawn by the complainants because they have come to the conclusion, when they have cooled down a bit, that they have no complaint to make.

This will be a busybodies' charter, allowing third parties to complain against police officers. I remind the House that, once a complaint is made, police officers are suspended, they go on no courses, their pay can be cut and their wives and families are under a cloud for a considerable time; all on the undocumented, second-hand complaint of a person who does not have to get the written agreement of the person on whose behalf he is complaining. That is unjust and the Government should not introduce this.

If we had had a proper Committee stage of a Bill, I am sure that the result would have been exactly the same as it was in the case of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act: all parties, having examined the case, would have thrown it out and the Government would have agreed. But, unfortunately, the Northern Ireland Office runs what is in effect a dictatorship. It can take this House for granted, because it can make orders of this kind and there is no way that we can effectively debate and amend them. Consequently, my hon. Friend is getting away with an injustice to the police and none of his bland words will make any difference. He has succeeded in imposing this on Northern Ireland police because of their unique position, but he will not impose it on police in England, Wales and Scotland. They will go to the aid of their colleagues in Northern Ireland, through whatever lawful course is open to them, to resist this to the end. We will get it changed one way or the other, because it is unjust.

The second matter I raise is one which my hon. Friend slid over by saying again that it is not an important change. The chief officer, the new complaints authority or the Police Authority of Northern Ireland will be able to take up what are politely called non-complaint matters because there is public interest. I do not object to the Police Authority, the complaints authority, the commission or anybody else raising a matter of obvious public interest, but I am concerned that too often it is media-led.

Most of us have seen in recent weeks how the media have seized on a matter and made a great song and dance about it; therefore, pressure is created. My hon. Friend, in correspondence with me, has said that where there is pressure of this kind it will be appropriate under this new order that the matter should be looked into. The obnoxious phrase contained in the order is "any matter" affecting the conduct of a police officer.

Mr. Scott: That phrase is in article 8(1) as well, which is exactly in line with the provision for England and Wales. Does my hon. Friend object to it being in there.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: My hon. Friend knows perfectly well that I am objecting to article 8(2), which is the means by which it will be applied differently in Northern Ireland. The House must face the fact that a police officer is just as much a citizen as anybody else. My hon. Friend in his reply used some splendid words about police officers being treated no differently from anyone else. That is not the case. A police officer is always under discipline and he is always, theoretically at least, on duty.

The phrase "any matter" means in practice that the police commission, the complaints commission and the Chief Constable may deal with those issues which are the private business of police officers in their own homes. It is the universal encyclopaedic power of the Secretary of State and of the commission to deal with any matter that is an intrusion upon the civil liberties of police officers. We do not have that on this side of the water; we do under article 8(1) but not under article 8(2). My hon. Friend has not studied the order carefully. This will allow the commission to deal with the private lives of police officers in a fashion that I regard as intolerable.

There is much I could say, but the hour is late and other hon. Members wish to speak. I wish to remind the House of two things. My hon. Friend, who has been in his job for a long time—he may feel that it has been too long—is regarded as an expert on police matters. I am not, but I take a keen interest in them. I do not think that my hon. Friend has a clue about what discipline can be like for young police officers in the circumstances of Northern Ireland. A young police officer who is charged by the assistant commissioner and who is dealt with by the Chief Constable is the loneliest man on earth. He can be arbitrarily transferred, bullied or treated in a way of which my hon. Friend has no idea. My hon. Friend's notion that somehow or other fair is fair and it all works out in the end is rubbish.

I know as of now that at a closed meeting of the federation not long ago a young sergeant expressed

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himself about the agonies of the duties that he had to carry out. As a free man, he is entitled to express himself as a federation representative in a closed meeting. There was a leak of what he said. In fact, there was a tape. The Chief Constable found out about it. That man is now on a discipline charge because he said things in that closed meeting of the federation that the Chief Constable did not like. The Chief Constable used the ominous phrase "discreditable conduct". That can mean anything.

Police officers do go wrong. Sometimes they bully and sometimes they are guilty of using excessive force. We do not want those people in the police force. But the police are just as much bullied as bullying. There is injustice to police officers as well. What my hon. Friend is doing tonight is making that much more likely and much easier. It is deeply resented.

Some of the information that my hon. Friend has been passing to me and to the federation and some of the things that he has said tonight are misleading. He originally claimed that the Government had accepted Lord Scarman's amendment. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough knows that Lord Scarman's amendment on the racial offence, which he supported, was rejected by the Government on three-line Whips in Committee and on the Floor of the House. For my hon. Friend to have stated in writing that the Government accepted it is not the truth. At the end of the day, because we were up against the buffers in that we were rising for the last election, the Government had no choice but to scupper the whole Bill or accept what the House of Lords had done. To suggest that the justification for a political religious offence in Northern Ireland is that the Government had accepted Lord Scarman's amendment for England and Wales is wide of the truth.

I take these matters seriously and I study them carefully with the police. Perhaps the Minister knows what he is doing, or perhaps he does not, but he has signed letters to me that have been positively misleading. He has no business to have done so.

The order has some provisions which I cannot oppose, so I cannot vote against it. But it has many provisions which are deeply offensive to the police service and they make my hon. Friend's rhetoric about support for the police sound very hollow. Tonight he has done a disservice to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the men and women of that force will for a long time associate his name personally with the damage he has done to their lives.

11.20 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Rightly or wrongly, I did not follow the advice of my party's Whips, and voted against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In the time available tonight, I shall raise two specific matters relating to policing.

On 30 April, I asked the Prime Minister

"if she will refer to the Security Commission recent allegations relating to the conduct of the late Sir Maurice Oldfield."
—[*Official Report*, 30 April 1987; Vol. 115, c. 202.]

The Prime Minister referred me to the answer that she had given to the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker). The Prime Minister's answer was ambiguous. It asked more questions than it answered. I am certain that the friends and family of the late Sir Maurice Oldfield are distressed at the ambiguity.

There is rather more to the matter than meets the eye. MI5 has been circulating a so-called gay story—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I find it difficult to see what connection there is between the hon. Gentleman's remarks and the Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. I hope that he will address himself to the order.

Mr. Dalyell: It refers to the handling of complaints. We are discussing Northern Ireland policing, are we not, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The story was commented on in Oldfield's biography by Richard Deacon, and it dismissed the Pincher story out of hand, as indeed does Sir Maurice Oldfield's biographer, Anthony Cavendish. When Oldfield was liaison officer——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to see any connection between the hon. Gentleman's speech and the order. If he cannot make the connection much more clear, I must ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not want to be out of order, but I thought that this was an order on Northern Ireland policing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The order's purpose is to establish a police complaints procedure in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dalyell: In that case, I had better give way to the Minister.

11.22 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I have some sympathy for my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). He was seeking to make points on complaints in Northern Ireland as they related to past incidents. He has made a point tonight, and it may be taken up elsewhere.

I shall refer briefly to the remarks of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). Of course the hon. Member knows, as I know, that we sat together through 59 Standing Committee sittings on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. When Mary Queen of Scots died, there was a certain name upon her heart. Possibly when we pass on, it will — *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) corrects me. It was Mary Tudor. He is perfectly right. That is what happens when one comments extemporaneously from a standing position.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): It is an interesting point. At that time, Calais was fully integrated with this country, sending two burgesses to the House.

Mr. Bell: The burgesses are still in the House. They are standing outside in Victoria Tower gardens as Rodin's "Burghers of Calais".

I shall relate the fact that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and I sat through 59 Standing Committee sittings on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, which became an Act of Parliament in 1984, to the intervention made by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). It is perfectly right that, in any other situation, the speech made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds would have been of such persuasiveness that a Government would have had to re-examine the matter. His points were based on obvious knowledge of the case and would have persuaded enough Committee members,

and certainly enough hon. Members, to urge the Government to examine it again. We are not in that situation. We are faced with a lengthy and complicated order dealing with complaints and discipline procedure. We are dealing with the objections of the Police Federation, which must be taken into account. As the hon. Gentleman said, they are on the sharp end, yet we have no way of discussing the issue in any great depth. The debate must terminate at 11.40 pm. I have some sympathy with the points that he made, and with his description of the order as a curate's egg. I must, therefore, bow to his judgment and his views on the matter, as an hon. Member who has studied it with great care.

However, we are all in the same position. There are no serried ranks here who could have been persuaded and could have overturned the Government's proposal. All that can be said in favour of the order is that it does not arise out of the Anglo-Irish Agreement—a point that was made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) in an earlier debate — but from a consultative document published in April 1985 at the behest of the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who is now Home Secretary.

As the explanatory note makes clear, we are dealing with a police force that commands the support and confidence of the public whom it serves, and whose aim is the maintenance of law and order and the combating of crime. It was, I felt, rather unfortunate that the Unionist Members who were here earlier sought to intervene so often in my speech, and prevented me from making a number of points that I had wished to make about the chief constable's annual report on the police work that takes place in Northern Ireland. It is a very interesting and constructive document, and it shows many of the positive aspects of the work done by the police—not only in relation to law and order but in the combating of crime, and in seeking to bridge the gap created by the sectarian divide.

Let us now return to the context of the order, and its relationship to the laws of the United Kingdom. We have said before—and we say it again—that as long as the Northern Irish people wish, in their majority, to stay a part of the United Kingdom, they should be governed as far as possible in accordance with the laws of the United Kingdom as those laws apply to England, Scotland and Wales. At the same time, as the Minister of State said earlier, we must somehow deal with the sensitivities of Northern Ireland which are special to the Province. In dealing with these orders, we must always strike the balance between establishing whether they go far enough to conform satisfactorily with the laws of England, Scotland and Wales, and at the same time deciding whether they deal with the peculiarities of Northern Ireland and Northern Irish life as we know them. We must make a value judgment on whether the order meets our criteria.

I was minded to think that it might do so, but I am less minded following the intervention of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. At some future time—not tonight, because of the shortage of time—there will have to be a lengthier explanation of what the order is about, how it will be applied and—this question was put earlier by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) and was referred to by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds —how we shall deal with the regulations on discipline when they are forthcoming through the Secretary of State.

Let me end my short speech by saying that, while we have no intention of dividing the House on the issue, we must make a comment that has all-party support. It may be the last time that we can make it in these circumstances. In a new Parliament, whichever party wins the election, there must be a different way of debating Northern Irish business in the House and in Committee. In one sense, we are fortunate: in the original timetable for this week, we had another order to debate, on industrial relations in Northern Ireland. We should be thankful for small mercies. However, there must be changes in the procedures of the House to enable us to give proper credence and analysis to orders such as this.

Perhaps the Minister will be able to respond to the issue raised earlier, on whether the regulations that will be coming forward will be debated in the House, or at least debated as a statutory instrument, or whether there can be consultation on the matter that meets the requirements of those who have to enforce the law in Northern Ireland. As I said earlier, they are the people at the sharp end. They deserve our support, and they deserve not to feel any sense of injustice that may arise out of the order. All I ask the Minister to say is that after the general election there will be an opportunity for the House to deal with these matters in greater depth.

11.29 pm

Mr. Scott: This particular form of legislation for Northern Ireland is not my responsibility. In due course there will be discussions about it, but let me make clear the factual position regarding the regulations that in due course will be made under the order.

Any secondary legislation that is made under this Order in Council will be dealt with according to the negative resolution procedure, and it will be for the usual channels to determine whether or not there is to be a debate on the Floor of the House. There will be extensive consultations with all those who have an interest in the drafting of the regulations.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) recognises that in discussing the shape of the order we are referring to a balance between the interests of the police and the interests of the public. Anything that tilted too much in one direction or the other would not be an acceptable way of dealing with complaints. I recognise my hon. Friend's connection with the Police Federation, and I expect him to fight for his corner on the Floor of the House, but I have a responsibility towards the whole community in Northern Ireland, as well as the one that I seek to discharge as effectively as I can towards the men and women in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I hope that any discussions that we have on the matter will be conducted on the basis of mutual respect and good will and not in the way that my hon. Friend dealt with his last few points.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) asked whether the Commission's powers of supervision are precisely the same as those that operate in England and Wales. I assure him that all the powers that are available on this side of the water will be made available to the Commission for supervising any investigations.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the places in Northern Ireland where people could register a complaint. They can complain by means of a citizens advice bureau, or a public representative—a Member of Parliament or

[Mr. Scott]

a friend—or direct to the Commission, or to the Police Authority for Northern Ireland. It is not necessary for a complaint to be registered at a police station. That will be covered by guidance, and in due course it will be issued to the public in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the role of the Chief Constable. He was in error, in that there is no subjective element in his role. Any complaint must be the subject of formal investigation and referred to the Commission, where the conduct complained of would, if proved, warrant a criminal or a disciplinary charge. All formal investigations have to go to the Commission. That is covered by the order. If a complaint cannot be registered informally, it must in due course be made the subject of a formal investigation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds referred to this being a change. It is not a change. The order incorporates the practice that already exists in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. If a complaint is made by a third party, the police send an officer to interview the original complainant and ask him whether he wishes to stand by his complaint. If the complainant does not, that will be the end of the matter. Any statement made by the original complainant to the police would have to be signed, of course.

I think that my hon. Friend overestimates the difference between this arrangement for Northern Ireland and the practice in Great Britain. We have heard of one case today in which a Member of the House registered a complaint on behalf of a constituent. The force exercised its discretion, which is covered in the guidance, and did not check for written consent. A police officer then went to interview the original complainant, who did not wish to pursue the complaint. The police therefore took no further action in respect of that complaint. That is what happened with a British force and it is precisely what would happen in practice in Northern Ireland if such a step were taken.

The point of principle raised by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh is whether there should be a totally independent system of investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland. I know of no place in the world where such a system has operated successfully over a period. It was tried for a limited period in one force in Canada but was found to be unworkable in practice.

I believe that we have the balance right. To take away from skilled, trained detectives, able and practised in investigating complaints, assessing evidence, and so on, and to put it into the hands of a totally independent body in my view would not work in practice. The essential point is that those conducting the investigations should be accountable to a body that is independent both of the police force and of the Government. I believe that that is the right way to go ahead. To imagine that one could establish some totally independent body with totally separate training which could then investigate matters which are very much within the police family is, in my view, an unrealistic expectation.

I believe that it is right to leave the actual investigation in the hands of the police but to provide extensive supervisory powers—they were read out by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh in a series of questions, all of which I answered in the affirmative—to supervise the investigation, to decide the investigating officer, to ask for further evidence to be produced, and so on. I believe that that kind of control and accountability by those carrying out the investigation and those whose duty it is to supervise it will provide the best balance in the interests of both police and public in Northern Ireland. I very much hope that the police and the public in Northern Ireland will give the new legislation a fair wind as I believe that it can operate very clearly in the interests of both parties, and I hope that that is how it will be seen to operate in due course.

Mr. Dalyell: I wish to ask a question about a specific complaint by the friends of the late Sir Maurice Oldfield. They feel that the position has been made quite impossible. The dead have rights in these matters and the innuendo has been left that Sir Maurice had some kind of homosexual relationship at the Highwayman inn in the North, although it is incredible to suppose how he got there when he did not even have a driving licence. All that smear and innuendo surrounding the dead should be cleared up far more satisfactorily than has been done by the Prime Minister's statement.

If the idea is that something happened above the loft in his flat, it should be remembered that there was electronic surveillance operating there almost the whole time and evidence that has come to me from Sir Maurice's bodyguards makes it clear that there could have been no such goings on at the time when he had those very sensitive jobs. Surely we owe it to the dead to clear their names completely and not leave ambiguous statements. All I ask is that this particular complaint should be examined seriously by Ministers.

Mr. Scott: I admire the hon. Gentleman's ingenuity in introducing these matters into a debate on a police complaints order, but they are not within my competence or responsibility. I admire the dedication which led the hon. Gentleman to raise the subject on behalf of the family of Sir Maurice Oldfield and I am sure that those who have competence in these matters will read what the hon. Gentleman has said and will determine what action may be taken.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 79, Noes 13.

Division No. 158] **[11.39 pm**

AYES

Baldry, Tony	Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Batiste, Spencer	Jackson, Robert
Beith, A. J.	Kennedy, Charles
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Key, Robert
Brooke, Hon Peter	King, Rt Hon Tom
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Cash, William	Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Cope, John	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Lester, Jim
Durant, Tony	Lilley, Peter
Fenner, Dame Peggy	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*	Lord, Michael
Forth, Eric	McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Fox, Sir Marcus	Malone, Gerald
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*	Marland, Paul
Galley, Roy	Maude, Hon Francis
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*	Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Ground, Patrick	Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*	Moynihan, Hon C.
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*	Needham, Richard
Hargreaves, Kenneth	Nelson, Anthony
Harvey, Robert	Neubert, Michael
Heddle, John	Norris, Steven
Hirst, Michael	Ottaway, Richard

Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Kilfedder, James A.
McCusker, Harold
Maginnis, Ken
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Willian Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 16th December, be approved.

Glasgow Airport (Strip-search Procedures)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

11.49 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I sought this debate to bring to the attention of the House, and especially to the Minister, the scandalous strip-search procedures that are employed by Her Majesty's Customs at Glasgow airport and, I suspect, at other airports and seaports in Britain. Those procedures, and the physical facilities in which they are conducted, are a scandal and must be changed and improved.

First, I wish to say a word or two about the distressing and humiliating ordeal that was experienced recently by a young woman at Glasgow airport. Naturally, that young woman, a constituent of mine, must remain anonymous. At about 1600 hours on Monday 20 April, the young woman arrived at Glasgow airport on a flight from Amsterdam. After close questioning and a careful examination of her luggage, she was told to wait for a while. Approximately one hour later, after first being questioned, the young woman was led away for an intimate body search. Customs officials prefer to talk about "strip searches", whereas the police and prison officers talk, in my view more honestly, about "intimate body searches".

I shall now quote from the young woman's account of that humiliating experience. She came to see me at my surgery and I asked her to write out her account for me. This is part of her description:

"Then two women asked me to follow them. I was taken into this room and she locked the door. She"——

that is the Customs official——

"said, do you know this is a body search? I said, what is that? What do you want me to take off? She said, everything. I said I had a period. She said, are you wearing anything? I said, yes, a tampon. After I had taken all my clothes off, she asked me to put my arms out by my side. She checked there. Then she told me to bend over, and she checked my back passage. By this time I was so embarrassed and angry that they can do this to innocent people. Then the other woman handed her a paper hankie, and then she said could I remove my tampon. I said, do you not have a toilet? She said, you can see we don't have one here. I said to them, this is the most embarrassing thing to do . . . She said it was not very pleasant for them, they were only doing their job . . . So she handed me a paper hankie, and I had to remove my tampon and give it to her in the hankie . . . By this time I was just about crying. I asked her could I put my bra on. The other woman had my passport and asked me my name and address, and marked it down in a book. Then I finally got to put my clothes back on. Then I got taken back to where our luggage was lying.

I wasn't even allowed to go to a toilet and use a clean tampon, or wash my hands. My fiancé was there when I got out. I was so upset by this, we had to wait another 10-15 minutes. Then the man who checked our bags came out with another man. They gave us back our passports and said, thank you, that they were just only doing their job."

The young lady goes on to say:

"I feel so hurt by this, and I have never been so degraded in all of my life. I would never want to go through anything like that again."

The young woman, who is a fine, decent, law-abiding citizen, told me that she was naked for 10 to 15 minutes. Incidentally, even female prisoners in Scottish prisons are not treated so callously. In response to a question I tabled on intimate body searches in Scottish prisons, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland said:

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

"The procedures observed in Scottish penal establishments for the strip-searching of female prisoners by female staff are as follows:

> *(a)* When a female is being strip-searched she is required, after removing her outer garments, to remove or drop to the waist the underclothing of the upper half of her body; she is then provided with a sheet to wrap around herself before removing the underclothing from the lower half of her body for examination. In the interest of decency great care is taken by the examining officer to ensure the minimum exposure of the body at any given time." — [*Official Report*, 12 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 486.]

I am sorry to say that my constituent was not treated with that civility.

I was so angry when I heard the complaint that I immediately decided to visit Glasgow airport and examine the facilities. At the airport I met Mr. David Waddell and Mr. Fitzcharles of HM Customs. Both officials were faultlessly courteous and co-operative. I was shown the facilities. In other words, I was shown into a scruffy little cell which contained a cheap table and chairs, all bolted to the floor for obvious reasons. There were no coat hangers or coat hooks. I was told that the nearest lavatory was some 30 yards away—not down a quiet corridor, but back through the customs hall.

In this case an innocent young woman who was menstruating and did not have a spare sanitary towel was 30 yards from the privacy of a cloak room. That is nothing short of disgraceful. The young woman did not object to a body search. Like the overwhelming majority of decent people, she abhors drug trafficking and accepts that occasionally innocent travellers must undergo intimate searches. But surely it should not be such a degrading experience.

I blame both Her Majesty's Customs and the British Airports Authority for the callous neglect of individual's needs. Once the search has taken place, preceded by the traveller being informed of his or her rights, immediate access to a wash room should be offered. Once the Customs officials are satisfied with the search, a door should be unlocked and access given to an adjoining cloak room which should contain a lavatory, a wash basin, a bidet, a shower and a supply of towels and sanitary towels. Prominently displayed on the wall of the search room should be a notice stating the rights of an individual caught up in those circumstances. None of those obtains in Glasgow airport and I suspect that that is the case at most airports north and south of the border.

Customs officials should wear plastic gloves when conducting intimate searches. No doctor or medical practitioner would conduct such an examination without plastic gloves. At all times they should be courteous to those they search. I regret to say that that was not so in this case. Nor is this an isolated incident. I have been informed that an Aberdeen student travelling to Glasgow airport two months ago, also menstruating at the time, was subjected to the same harrowing ordeal. She chose not to complain to her Member of Parliament, who is not the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. The BBC television programme "That's Life" recently reported, I think on 5 April, about 14 or 15 cases rather similar to the Glasgow case.

Customs and Excise derives its power to search people entering seaports and airports from section 164 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. Subsection 164(2) outlines a person's rights. It states:

"A person who is to be searched in pursuance of this section may require to be taken before a Justice of the Peace or a superior of the officer or other person concerned, and the Justice or superior shall consider the grounds for suspicion and direct accordingly whether or not the search is to take place."

There is no statutory obligation to inform a passenger who is to be searched of this right, although I would hope that Customs officials would do so. I am informed that in the Glasgow case that information was withheld from the young woman concerned. Even though Customs officials are not bound under the Customs and Excise Management Act to produce a code of practice for intimate body searches, Customs has agreed to follow those practices that are required under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

I am deeply concerned about the code of practice since the number of body searches may be on the increase due to the evil of drug trafficking. It is an evil that regrettably continues to grow. Have these searches become a regular feature? Is there a monthly quota of strip searches set out for each airport and seaport? How many strip searches have taken place in each of the past five years? Are they on the increase?

The powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to conduct searches and, therefore, the codes of practice do not apply to Scotland. Customs officials in Scotland conduct searches under departmental instructions that are not available to the public. Will the Minister or one of his Scottish ministerial colleagues place a copy of those departmental instructions in the Library? I would certainly like to look at them, and I am sure that many other people would, too.

It appears that those departmental instructions differ little from the English statutory code of practice. However, the Scottish instructions are not so binding as they would be in England and Wales, and they may not be adhered to as strictly as those south of the border. This is deeply worrying, because the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, which I suspect will be returning here within a few days, proposes new powers of detention by Customs officers. Under clause 44 of the Bill, Customs officers would exercise the same powers of search that are available following an arrest. In the case of drugs, a suspect is required to submit to an intimate search, to be carried out by a registered medical practitioner, not by a Customs official.

I support wholeheartedly the often marvellous work performed by police officers and Customs officials to capture those evil wrongdoers, the drug traffickers. I have seen the dreadful evidence of their evil work in the west of Scotland. Despite my wholehearted support for the activities of Customs officials and police officers, the interests of innocent travellers must be protected at all times. That care must include both the provision of physical facilities, along the lines that I have outlined, and the fair application of codes of practice north and south of the border. The BBC television programme "That's Life" has documented cases that are as disturbing as the one that I have outlined about a young constituent of mine.

I want to hear from the Minister a positive response to my demand that the physical facilities in the search room

at our airports will be improved. I also want an assurance that the codes of practice governing these intimate body searches will be adhered to in a fair, responsible and courteous way by the Customs officials involved.

12.5 am

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): I am most grateful to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for bringing up this matter and for the manner in which he did so. Before I deal in detail with the points made by the hon. Gentleman, it might be helpful if I explained something about the search procedures operated by Customs and Excise.

The need for such procedures has been acknowledged by the hon. Gentleman and by others. Drugs smugglers have been found among almost every category of passenger. Couriers may include anyone from a baby to an old-age pensioner. There have been cases involving people who would normally elicit sympathy, for example an invalid confined to a wheelchair, and drugs are frequently imported concealed in or on the body.

The difficulties facing customs officers as they seek to intercept smuggled drugs and apprehend those responsible can be readily appreciated. Customs officers depend a great deal on the understanding and good will of the ordinary travelling public. The hon. Gentleman was generous in what he said on that subject.

There are particular problems where drugs are concealed internally or carried on the body, and this method of concealment gives rise to some very distasteful tasks which have to be performed by customs officers. None the less, officers are required to carry out the search procedures diligently. Customs and Excise realises that a personal search is not a pleasant experience and recourse to such measures is closely controlled by management, and officers are required to conduct all such examinations with tact and courtesy.

I readily acknowledge that it is regrettable that innocent passengers will, on occasion, be subject to search. However, Customs and Excise does not search people as a matter of routine or on a random basis. The law requires that there must be grounds for suspicion before a person can be searched. The procedures operated by Customs and Excise requires the examining officer first to explain the circumstances and then to obtain the permission of a senior officer, usually his line manager, before a search of a person can take place. A passenger, who is to be searched, may require to go before a justice of the peace —or a sheriff in Scotland—or a superior officer who will adjudicate and direct whether the proposed search should proceed.

A passenger may be searched only by an officer of the same sex. In most searches the passenger is not required to be completely naked at any one time. After outer clothing has been removed and examined, usually it will be possible for the top and bottom halves of the body to be unclothed and reclothed separately. As drugs are frequently concealed in body orifices, it may be necessary for women passengers to remove any sanitary protection.

If passengers are required to be without clothes other than very briefly, a blanket or other suitable covering will be provided. I understand from Customs and Excise that searches do not normally take very long and are usually completed in five or six minutes. If further sanitary protection is required after the search it will be provided.

While a search is in progress and, indeed, from the earliest moment at which the passenger is being interviewed, customs officers have to be extremely vigilant and observant to ensure that a smuggled item or other evidence is not moved from one concealment to another or is not disposed of. This explains much about the nature of the search procedure and why search rooms are sparsely furnished. For example, hand basins and flush toilets are not provided because they represent a most obvious means of disposal. If either of these facilities is required, portable equipment is held and will be brought to the search room.

In the particular circumstances in which drugs or other goods have been swallowed, the provision of portable or other non-plumbed facilities is important to allow officers to recover the evidence after it has passed through the body. These are extremely unpleasant duties, demanding much of the officers, as well as the careful following of prescribed procedures. We should all be grateful for the work that customs officers do on our behalf.

There are occasions when search procedures require more than visual examination of the passenger and an internal examination is required. Such circumstances are specifically provided for in law in England, and customs follows comparable procedures to those used by the police. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has broadly similar proposals before the House at this time. Internal examinations may only be carried out by a qualified medical practitioner, and any examinations of that kind would normally take place in the doctor's surgery. If it seems likely that such an examination will be required, the officer must first—in law—obtain the express permission of the appropriate grade of officer—in customs terms, a senior executive officer.

I have dealt at some length with the practical aspects of search of person, touching, as appropriate, on the legal provisions. The hon. Gentleman expressed disquiet about the premises that are available for search at Glasgow airport, and, in particular, he has expressed concern about the absence of ordinary toilet facilities in or adjacent to the search room. I have explained why search rooms are of necessity purely functional, to prevent the concealment or disposal of drugs or other goods or evidence. I am advised by customs that the search rooms and other accommodation provided for use by the public for the purposes of customs examination at Glasgow airport are considered satisfactory. A toilet is available some 20 yd or so from the search room. However, having seen the plans of the airport building, I freely acknowledge that, depending on which search room is being used, and on whether a male or female toilet is being used, the toilets are 20 to 30 yd from the search rooms, and in the opposite direction in terms of traffic flow. Those facilities are not provided by customs, but by the British Airports Authority, which owns and operates the airport.

It may help if I explain that Customs and Excise airports are approved by the Secretary of State for Transport in conjunction with the commissioners of Customs and Excise. However, airport operators cannot provide for international services without the appropriate parts of their premises being approved by customs for the handling of passengers or freight, as the case may be. By such means, international traffic is canalised so that customs procedures can be effectively and economically administered.

[The Minister of State, Treasury]

A balance must be struck between commercial and official requirements. Clearly, there must be sufficient public accommodation embracing facilities for immigration and customs purposes. Public accommodation in this context means all that is required for official procedures and used by the ordinary travelling public, including baggage hall, search and interview rooms and associated areas. Customs makes known its essential requirements for the application of the relevant customs controls, but the provision of the facilities is the operator's responsibility. Generally, the development of facilities for trade and official purposes proceeds harmoniously, and I have no reason to believe that there is any shortfall in the facilities provided by the British Airports Authority at Glasgow airport.

As I did not know precisely what the hon. Gentleman was going to say before he embarked on his speech, I want to respond more informally to some of the specific points that he raised.

It is important, in terms of the management of the process, to recognise the distinction between strip searches, which are essentially visual, and intimate searches, which are essentially of a tactile nature. The latter require medical supervision and the use of gloves. Visual search does not involve touch. The tampon that was removed was placed in a plastic glove for disposal. That explains why the equipment may be different.

The hon. Gentleman said that his constituent was naked for 10 to 15 minutes. One's judgment in such instances may necessarily be somewhat subjective; one may think that a disagreeable experience is continuing for longer than it actually is. Customs information, which obviously has to be recorded in an annotated form so that there is a record of the event, shows that the search lasted from 1700 hours to 1705. I recognise that there is a give or take of several minutes.

I have sought to respond generally to what has been said about the facilities at Glasgow. Both Customs and the British Airports Authority will be able to read the report of the debate and follow closely the hon. Gentleman's submissions. I shall make certain that the BAA, which does not fall within my responsibility, has its attention drawn to the hon. Gentleman's comments.

The hon. Gentleman has asked about the number of searches that are conducted. There were 46,000 searches of all sorts conducted last year by customs, which means about one in every 1,000 inward passengers. Of the 46,000, 840 were intimate searches. As will have been apparent from my earlier observations and from the description of the search that took place during the incident that we are discussing, we are not dealing with an intimate search as defined in legislation, that is of the tactile nature that I have mentioned. Of the 840 intimate searches, 224 revealed drugs being carried internally by those who were being searched. There were 32 searches at Glasgow and 10 of them produced drugs. One of the 10 involved internal concealment. There is no quota of any sort, for the reason that I have given already. There must be clear and specific suspicion before a passenger can be searched.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether it was possible to provide specific instructions. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 provides specific instructions in a code of practice on what must be done in the carrying out of intimate searches. I think that he asked also whether there might be similar instructions and a pattern of behaviour for more general searches, including strip searches.

Historically it has been left to the good judgment of officers to decide precisely what they should say to passengers about the procedures and their rights. There is a management problem in being too specific and too formal about rights. If an officer is asking someone only to take off his jacket, and he informs him that he has the right to go before a sheriff or a justice of the peace, he will read much more into the event than that which is intended. As a result of recent cases and current concern, it is now, under training procedure, standard practice for officers to inform those who are being searched of the nature of the procedure and that certain rights exist. This is an oral transmission of information on the ground that a written one would run the risk of going over the top into formality, which runs the risk of losing the co-operation of passengers, on which fundamentally all good customs work is based.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether departmental instructions could be put in the Library. It is not Customs and Excise policy to put such departmental instructions in the Library. Operational matters are regarded as confidential within Customs, but matters related to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the code of practice are incorporated in the instructions. I give that assurance to the hon. Gentleman.

I recognise that Scotland will pose a problem until we have greater formalisation. Nevertheless, Customs seeks to interpret it within the spirit of the prevailing legislation. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having brought up the case in the manner that he did. On his opening remark, that the searches were scandalously insensitive, I understand—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at nineteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 May 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Tuesday 12 May at Seven o'clock.

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[LORDS] (By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 14 May.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 12 May at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sentencing Policy

1. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to monitor the effect on the pattern of sentencing of the operation of the Lord Chief Justice's guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Sentencing trends are constantly monitored and we have carefully examined the effects of recent Court of Appeal guideline judgments. As I would expect, they have a real impact on sentencing.

Dr. Clark: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the long sentences available are being used for serious crimes? Does he believe that there is sufficient differentiation in sentencing between those found guilty of medium-ranking crimes against property and those found guilty of serious crimes against people, especially children?

Mr. Hurd: That differentiation is something that everybody would like to see. The guidelines have an effect in the direction that my hon. Friend advocates. For example, the rape guideline in the Bilham case in 1985 has been followed by an increase in the proportion of those received into prison with sentences of more than five years from 20 to 45 per cent. There has been a similar increase following the Boswell guideline on causing death by reckless driving.

Mr. Lawrence: In view of my right hon. Friend's apparent satisfaction with the operation of the important guidelines, would he consider dropping clause 29 from the new edition of the Criminal Justice Bill, which, by general consent of Bar and Bench, is manifestly and palpably absurd?

Mr. Hurd: I have observed that clause 29 has been criticised in another place, as here, with equal force both by those who say that it goes too far and by those who say that it does not go far enough. We should wait and see how we get on next week.

Crime Prevention

2. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives he will take to promote crime prevention.

Mr. Hurd: We are planning to launch a new national crime prevention campaign, with an enhanced publicity budget, later this year. We have made provision to sustain this campaign over the next two years. The emphasis will be on showing how all those who are concerned about rising crime can make their own contribution to preventing it.

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that response. As 96 per cent. of crime involves property and 25 per cent. of that proportion involves cars, is it not absolutely essential that the public be involved in the protection of their own property? In his crime prevention programme, what attention will be given to specific schemes such as neighbourhood watch, which has a very good track record of success? Will he promote that scheme, among others?

Mr. Hurd: We shall certainly do that. It is amazing and encouraging that there are 29,500 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales, whereas three years ago there were only about 1,000. This is a real outburst of energy by the citizen in co-operation with the police, and we warmly welcome it.

Mr. Wheeler: I welcome my right hon. Friend's excellent news. Referring specifically to the Metropolitan police district, does he welcome also the 7,000 neighbourhood watch schemes that exist in the district and recognise the excellent contribution that they are making to community-based crime prevention? Will he hazard a comment on the quite extraordinary behaviour of the nine Labour London borough councils which persistently attack the police and refuse to co-operate with crime prevention measures both in their districts and in the inner London schools? How does this sit with the extraordinary claim by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that he is in favour of crime prevention based in the community?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know where the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is, but my hon. Friend has certainly put his finger on the reason why the Labour party's campaign on law and order has completely failed to get off the ground. Part of its document asks me to do things that I have been doing for some time already, and the rest asks me to do things that no one in his right senses would think of doing, such as handing over responsibility of policing policies, priorities and methods to elected Labour authorities, particularly in London.

Mr. Soley: Leaving aside the party political propaganda that we have just heard, let us concentrate on the facts. In view of the Secretary of State's answer, which suggests a welcome shift in opinion in the Conservative party and the Government, and bearing in mind the answer that the Under-Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 23 April, which again suggested a shift in Government thinking, can he tell us whether the Government are to fund crime prevention in the way in which we are recommending in our document? If so, do they intend to announce that prior to the general election, in the same way as for nurses pay and school education?

Mr. Hurd: There is ample funding of crime prevention from a wide variety of sources—publicity by the Home Office and a mass of schemes financed partly by the urban programme and partly by local authorities. The hon. Gentleman is unfair. When I came to the Home Office for the first time in 1983 I found that the then Home Secretary, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), had already begun to put massive emphasis on crime prevention, and that has been intensified and developed ever since. I am delighted that the Labour party is clambering on board and hope that it will manage to bring with it all those boroughs which are still obstructing the scheme.

Mr. Sims: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the increasing number of crimes involving knives, particularly in south-east London, and of the concern in the community about them? Is he aware of the extent of frustration among police officers caused by the rules imposed upon them under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which limits the extent to which they can stop and search people suspected of carrying knives? Will my right hon. Friend consider reviewing the way in which this part of the Act is working and, meanwhile, perhaps introduce legislation to prevent the sale of some of the horrifying weapons that are at present freely available in the shops?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right about knives, but not right in what he said about the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which does not limit the power of the police in that respect. It simply requires them to make, when they can, a record of what occurred and why. I do not think that that is unreasonable. We are looking at my hon. Friend's final point about sale and possession. Of course, there are many wholly innocent reasons why people should carry knives from time to time, and that creates a problem about legislation. However, if we can find ways of strengthening the law to deal with offensive weapons, such as my hon. Friend suggests, we will take it.

Exeter Prison

3. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners Exeter prison is designed to accommodate; how many were there on the last day of January, February and March; how many cells have more than the intended number of occupants; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): Since Exeter comprises three separate units, a local prison, a remand centre and a long-term youth custody centre, each with its own certified normal accommodation and population, I will, with permission circulate in the *Official Report* the information requested.

Mr. Speller: I cannot anticipate the information that my hon. and learned Friend will provide, but may I ask whether he knows, for example, how many hours per day the average prisoner is locked up in Exeter prison? How many of the cells have even the most fundamental forms of running water and sanitation? Is he satisfied that, when so much money is being spent by the Government on improving and rebuilding prisons, Exeter, which serves the few criminals in north Devon, is not being left behind in the race?

Mr. Mellor: Work is going on at Exeter. One wing is out of commission for work at the moment. As my hon. Friend has rightly said, we have embarked on the biggest programme of any Government this century to improve the condition in the old prisons. I shall certainly bear in mind what my hon. Friend said about Exeter. We are aware that it is currently overcrowded. We are aware also that on some days prisoners are locked up for 23 hours, but sometimes it is as little as nine hours. Plainly, the situation is not satisfactory, and it is entirely in accordance with my hon. Friend's concern for his area that he should raise the matter with me.

Mr. Hannam: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the stresses and strains suffered by prison officers as a result of overcrowding at Exeter prison, which, as he said, is a remand prison? When does he envisage a proper complement of prison officers being reached at that prison?

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps I could write to my hon. Friend about the details. As he knows, we have recruited a large number of additional prison officers over the years. Indeed, the ratio of prison officers to inmates is running well ahead of any increase in the prison population. I shall certainly ensure that the needs of Exeter are not overlooked.

Mrs. Renée Short: To my knowledge—which goes back to 1964—the question of overcrowding in our old prisons and the appalling conditions in which we keep prisoners has been raised again and again, and we have received exactly the same replies. That is scandalous. Is the Minister aware that the conditions in which we keep men in prison, three to a cell and with no sanitary provision except for a chamber pot, is not conducive to good remedial prison practice? When will the Minister change that?

Mr. Mellor: Of course, what the hon. Lady says is right——

Mrs. Renée Short: Not excuses again?

Mr. Mellor: No, it is not excuses. It is a sign of the impotence of the hon. Lady and others who, like her, felt that they were utterly incapable of persuading the Government that they supported slavishly over the years to spend any money on prisons. Since 1979 we have embarked on the largest prison building and improvements programme, but we cannot overturn the neglect of decades in just a few years. Matters are a great deal better now than they were when the hon. Lady was on the Government Benches.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the real and main cause of prison overcrowding

is that the Labour party, when it came to power in 1974, cancelled, as a deliberate policy decision, the prison building programme that it had inherited from the previous Conservative Government?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend. If anyone could be bothered to consult the record, I dare say that it would be found that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) voted in favour of that decision.

Mr. Soley: The implication of the Minister's remarks is completely unacceptable. We all know that the crime rate, the number in prison and the number of young people incarcerated have rocketed under this Government. Is it not disgraceful, and an insult to the electorate, to make excuses citing the past? The Government must accept that their law and order and prison policies have failed. They included in the Criminal Justice Act 1982 a provision to enable the Home Secretary to release the prisoners that they wanted to release, and they are not doing so only because they are scared of the electoral consequences.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman's celebrated impression of a 78 rpm record stuck in the groove is no more impressive this week than it has been for the many weeks during which we have had to put up with it.

Following is the information:

The Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) and population figures are as follows:

	CNA	Population		
		31 January 1987	*28 February 1987*	*31 March 1987*
Remand Centre	53	56	70	68
Local Prison	209	336	363	343
Youth Custody Centre	41	39	39	39

The number of prisoners sharing cells is only recorded centrally once a month. Recent figures are:

	Remand Centre	*Local Prison*	*YC Centre*
8 February 1987			
Number of inmates held two to a cell	26	162	No sharing
Number of inmates held three to a cell	9	129	No sharing
Number of cells overcrowded	13	124	No sharing
8 March 1987			
Number of inmates held two to a cell	36	176	No sharing
Number of inmates held three to a cell	3	105	No sharing
Number of cells overcrowded	19	123	No sharing
12 April 1987			
Number of inmates held two to a cell	30	186	No sharing
Number of inmates held three to a cell	15	102	No sharing
Number of cells overcrowded	20	127	No sharing

Inquests

5. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to change the length of time taken by coroners in dealing with inquests.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): We are satisfied that coroners accept the need to avoid unnecessary delay. We do not consider that there is a general problem which calls for any special action on the part of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Minister aware that that is a very unsatisfactory and complacent reply? He really must consider urgently the appointment of more coroners. Is he aware that some of the implications are not immediately noticeable — for example, the delay in receiving insurance and possible compensation, to say nothing of the distress caused to the bereaved who, in some cases, have to wait months? Will he apply his mind rather more urgently to the problem beyond what he said in his original reply?

Mr. Waddington: I appreciate the importance of the matter. Coroners are aware of the additional distress that can be caused to relatives if there is delay in completing an inquest. However, sometimes investigations take a long time.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has written to the hon. Gentleman about a particular case that he raised. It is not right for me to comment further, except to say that there has always been a part-time coroner in the district concerned and that, during the whole of the coroner's nine years in office, he has been supported by two coroner's officers. There is no question of the case being affected by a cut in resources, as has been suggested. Indeed, the number of inquests has actually fallen recently.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a general responsibility for the law, but has no power over the way in which coroners carry out their duties in a particular case. They are independent judicial officers. It is wrong to imply that in this case the coroner behaved improperly or was starved of the normal resources given to coroners.

Mr. William Powell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that most coroners' inquests have wide public support and are carried out with little difficulty? Nevertheless, a very small number each year cause great difficulties of fact and law, and it often takes a substantial period for the inquest to be carried out. Is my right hon. and learned Friend prepared to consider again whether it is possible or practicable to appoint special coroners from among senior members of the judiciary to carry out the inquests in that very small number of cases that cause public anxiety and difficulty?

Mr. Waddington: Obviously, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will bear in mind my hon. Friend's point. I repeat that my right hon. Friend has a general responsibility for the law, but he has no power over the

way in which coroners carry out their duties in a particular case. I do not think that the public take the view that in the vast majority of cases coroners do other than carry out their duties responsibly and properly.

Zircon

6. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the progress of his investigations into the Zircon affair; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Is it not 13 weeks and four days since executives and staff of the BBC were unceremoniously hauled out of their beds at 3 am on a February Sabbath? Is it not also a fact that, of course, the police got hold of no leakers, for the simple reason that there were no leaks? Did not Duncan Campbell put this programme together out of published information, then have it confirmed by those from the stratosphere of Whitehall, such as Sir Ronald Mason and Sir Frank Cooper? Is it not time that this police wasting of time came to an end and the Government admitted their folly?

Mr. Hurd: I am not calling for a report on this matter from the commissioner because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the commissioner reports direct to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I understand that the commissioner's report on this matter has now been received by the director.

Prisons

9. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to reduce prison overcrowding.

Mr. Hurd: We are proceeding with measures to make the best possible use of existing accommodation. The building programme, including refurbishment of existing prisons and new prisons, will produce 17,200 places by the mid-1990s. This includes five new prisons opening in the next 12 months. We continue to encourage the courts to use non-custodial sentences in suitable cases.

Mr. Fisher: I welcome those new places, but will the Home Secretary confirm that our prison population is the second highest in Europe, second only to Turkey? How many people are in our prisons for offences that are of no danger to the public? For instance, how many debt defaulters are in prison? What steps will the right hon. Gentleman take to resolve that problem?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman welcomes the provision of new places, but the Labour party's official policy is to halt the prison building programme. Among many zany undertakings, that is perhaps the most irresponsible. I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's general point. We have a high prison population in comparison with the total population. I think that Austria has a higher proportion than us. I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but the answer is not for politicians to step in and tell the courts who they are and who they are not to send to prison, but to ensure that the courts in the kind of lesser cases to which the hon. Gentleman referred have before them persuasively argued, tough and practical alternatives to custody. We are pursuing that course through our investment in the probation service, the training of the service and the encouragement of such measures as community service orders, the application of which has almost trebled in recent years.

Sir Edward Gardner: Yesterday the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on prisons recommended that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary should consider whether the American practice of using private contractors to build, refurbish and manage prisons could be used here to overcome the problem of chronic overcrowding. Will he confirm that he intends to send a Minister to America to look at such prisons? Will he further confirm that the Prisons Officers Association has nothing to fear from the report's recommendation?

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that my hon. and learned Friend has raised that last point. Privatisation is not an accurate description of what he or I have in mind. We are not talking about selling-off existing prisons and putting them under private management. We are talking about whether, by using the private sector and its techniques more intensively, and perhaps at an earlier stage, we can accelerate the provision of prison places and thus ease as rapidly as possible the overcrowding with which we are concerned. I am asking my noble Friend Lord Caithness to go to the United States to follow up the research that was undertaken by the Select Committee.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that I entirely agree with him that under his Government the major growth industry in Britain has been the prison building programme?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is falling below his level. The fact of the matter — this has already been mentioned during these exchanges — is that under the Government whom he supported crime and the prison population grew sharply and nothing was done about it. They continue to grow, which I regret, but the difference is that we are, and have been over the past six or seven years, doing a great deal about it.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is wrong that alcoholics and rate defaulters should be sent to prison? Does he agree that the Government could reduce the overcrowding of our prisons by stopping the closure of psychiatric hospitals? Is he aware that during our inquiries into the prison medical service the Select Committee for Social Services found several hundred people in our prisons who more correctly should have been in a psychiatric hospital or asylum undergoing treatment rather than being in prison?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and one of the matters on which we have worked hard and successfully is the reduction of the number of inadequates who are sent to prison because no one can think of anywhere else to send them. The pressures that my hon. Friend and others have brought to bear have been effective.

With regard to fine defaulters, my hon. Friend has raised a difficult point, because, in the last resort, when all other measures have failed, it is hard to imagine how one can proceed except with the use of prison. I was interested to note that in the Standing Committee the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) endorsed that point of view.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Home Secretary accept and recognise that many people will feel repelled by the

proposal that our prisons should be privatised or run by private companies, because people who are in prison are supposed to be there because they have committed crimes against society, so it should be society's—that means the Government's — responsibility to administer those prisons? I suspect that this will be the last time that the Home Secretary will be at the Dispatch Box, because undoubtedly my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will be Home Secretary at the next Home Office questions. However, does today's Home Secretary agree that we need a long period of consultation before we move over to the privatisation of our prisons?

Mr. Hurd: It is because I thought that there might be that kind of mischievous supplementary that I said that privatisation is not what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) and his Select Committee or I have in mind. We are not thinking of handing over existing prisons to private management. If, by using the private sector and private sector techniques, we can accelerate and improve the provision of prison places, it would be stupid not to try to do so. The hon. Member said that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will take my place in the next Parliament. He has not bothered to come here today. It is notable that, on this matter, on which the Labour party is purporting to campaign, there are now 10 Labour Members on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to clarify the point that nobody is in prison for debt, but, rather, for contempt of court?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. That is why I referred to the last resort.

Mr. Dubs: The Home Secretary said that politicians should not interfere. Has he forgotten that his Government's Criminal Justice Act 1982 contained a provision for the executive release of prisoners? Why does he not read his own legislation?

Mr. Hurd: I have read the debate on the legislation often enough. We have discussed it in the House. The provision, which the hon. Member correctly said is in the 1982 Act, is clearly designed for use in an emergency. We are not in an emergency.

Electoral Law

12. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce legislation further to amend electoral law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: During the next Parliament we intend, after the usual consultations, to bring forward legislation to extend the period during which British citizens may live overseas and continue to register as overseas electors.

Mr. Knox: Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider issuing advice about the legality of direct mail letters that are targeted to particular constituencies during election campaigns? Is he aware that, according to *The Guardian*, the Conservative and alliance parties have received legal advice that such practice is illegal, and that they do not propose to use it during an election campaign, but that the Labour party proposes to do so? Would it not be a good idea to clarify the matter beyond any doubt?

Mr. Waddington: We should be grateful to my hon. Friend for raising what is obviously an important point. I am sure that the public would expect fair play and a reasonable understanding between the parties as to what is allowed by law. The public would not look kindly on a party that they thought had cheated.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister's views on electoral reform have been publicised. We know that he is in favour of it. Is it too much to hope for that, in the next few days, he can put through a Bill to conduct an election on a system of proportional representation? Given that the Government are often critical of extreme militants on local authority councils, does he accept that one way of controlling them is to have fair representation on local authority councils to ensure that extremism does not have its head in a minority of votes.

Mr. Waddington: There will certainly be no extremism when the Government are returned at the next general election. The Government believe that the simple majority system is the best system. It is well established, it is easily understood and it is most likely to produce Governments for whose policies the electorate has voted.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the dissatisfaction that has been expressed over the forms available for absent voters to be able to record their votes? Will he urgently consider the form and determine whether it could be simplified and made clearer in time for any possible early election?

Mr. Waddington: I am told that the form was designed on advice from electoral registration officers. Obviously, I shall discuss the matter with my right hon. Friend.

Violence (London)

13. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to deal with the rise in acts of violence against the person in the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Hurd: The number of recorded crimes of violence against the person in the Metropolitan police area in 1986 was about the same as in 1985. Operational decisions about the investigation of specific offences are a matter for the commissioner; but I strongly support his decision, recorded in his strategy statement for 1987, to place particular emphasis upon the safety of the citizen.

Mr. Smith: Have not crimes of violence against the person in the Metropolitan area risen by 43 per cent. since the Government came to office, and is there not one such crime every 26 minutes in our capital city? Is not the best way of preventing crimes of violence against the person to make sure that our streets are better lit and that there are no dark corners offering ample scope for lurking muggers? Why, then, have the Government reduced rate support grant, imposed penalties on local authorities, rate-capped London boroughs, and taken away from them, by so doing, the means with which to light our streets better?

Mr. Hurd: Crimes of violence generally have risen more slowly under this Government than under the Labour Government, although I do not make a great point of that. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right about street lighting, but wrong in supposing that the way to improvement is merely to shell out more money to local authorities. I visited the constituency of my hon. and learned Friend the

Minister of State, and the Labour wards in the Rochampton part of that constituency the other day. A great deal is being done there by the Wandsworth borough council to improve the street lighting, precisely with a view to crime prevention, and it has managed to keep the rates at a steady, reasonable level as compared to its neighbours.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. friend join me in welcoming the Government's present initiative in putting a large amount of money into improving street lighting in London boroughs, and advise boroughs such as Islington, which do not know about that, to find out about it? Does my right hon. Friend agree that Labour boroughs such as Ealing, which are financing expensive campaigns to ask people to complain against the police, would be better advised to put the money used for that into extra policing to overcome the violence of which they complain?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly true — even in London, where the boroughs have no police responsibility whatever — as the example of Wandsworth bears out, that a borough that is well disposed to working with the police to improve the security of its citizens can give a lead and manage to contrive ample ingenious schemes of crime prevention without new expenditure.

Mr. Forman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that dealing with crimes of violence against the person is regarded as the highest possible priority of the Government's law and order policy, and of the commissioner and his senior officers in the Metropolitan police? In that context, will he give his support to further measures of encouraging more police on to the beat and more crime prevention techniques?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. As far as London is concerned, last month I further increased the establishment limits of the Metropolitan police. It is now for them to recruit up to those limits, and the commissioner's reorganisation, as my hon. Friend knows, has, by itself, put over 218 more officers on the beat.

Mr. Tony Banks: Why does the Home Secretary say that no London boroughs have responsibility for policing? Does he not know that the City of London, which is one of London's boroughs, is a police authority? Is that not an anachronism that should be ended? When will the Home Secretary come forward with proposals for elected police authorities in London such as those that exist elsewhere in the country?

Mr. Hurd: I am not going to come forward with proposals that would put the priorities for the policing of London under the control of people such as Mr. Bernie Grant.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend think that efforts to reduce violent crime would be helped or hindered, by Opposition policies to extend political control over police tactics and operational strategy?

Mr. Hurd: That would be lunatic. I do not know what candidates the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is supporting today, but if he is supporting candidates of the Manchester city council Labour party, they are precisely the same type of leaders as those in the half dozen or more boroughs in London in which Labour leaders such as Bernie Grant — unlike Miss Atkin, who was got rid of overnight — continue in full favour with the Labour leadership — despite the fact that the things that Mr. Grant said were much more offensive to the British people than what Miss Atkin said.

Autocrime

16. **Mr. Allan Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the steps he is taking to reduce the level of crimes which involve cars.

24. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of overall crime involves cars; and what plans he has to seek to reduce this level.

Mr. Mellor: We regularly receive correspondence from right hon. and hon. Members as well as from members of the public about various aspects of autocrime. Theft of or from cars accounts for about 25 per cent. of all recorded crime. Most such offences are committed by opportunist criminals preying on cars which are intrinsically insecure, and car owners who fail to make the best use of security devices. Accordingly, efforts to reduce autocrime concentrate on preventive measures. Crime prevention publicity seeks to make motorists more security-conscious; car security advice leaflets are being distributed with licence reminders; and the new highway code also contains suitable advice. Manufacturers are being encouraged to improve the security aspects of new cars and the advice on car security which they give to car owners.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that most helpful reply. Does he agree that a crucial consideration in the level of crime involving cars is police manpower? Is he aware that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) recently visited my constituency to talk about law and order without, apparently, knowing that the major problem is that the Labour group of the Strathclyde regional council, uniquely in Scotland, keeps its police numbers below authorised establishment as a matter of policy? The resultant swing to the Conservatives in Eastwood and the fact that the right hon. Member for Gorton made an ass of himself are not matters of regret, but is it not important that the public throughout Great Britain know of the importance of proper levels of police manpower to deal with crimes involving cars as well as other crimes?

Mr. Mellor: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Townsend: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the high level of autocrime distorts to some extent overall criminal statistics? Secondly, does not the answer lie in far more electronic gadgetry being installed by motor car manufacturers? It is absurd how easy cars are made for the criminal to break into.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend has touched on two crucial issues. Autocrime is one of the great growth crimes, and has been for the past 20 years. The reason is that it is easily carried out. Too many car owners are slack in the manner in which they leave their cars, and one in five is still left unlocked. Secondly, perhaps too little attention has been focused in the past on the need for good car security as a selling point for a car, and I am glad to say that a new British standard of vehicle security has been launched. We are getting co-operation from motor manufacturers. I

hope that car security will improve, that the public will be aware of the improvement and that they will make use of improved security measures.

Mr. Beith: What has happened to our education system if it leads Ministers to come out with expressions such as autocrime, which, if it means anything, means crime against the self? Does the Minister realise that many crimes involving cars involve drink as well? Instead of being sympathetic to the progress of the Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), will he recognise that we should tackle the problem of drink and driving if we are to make changes to our licensing laws?

Mr. Mellor: It took about half an hour for an alliance representative to appear in the Chamber for questions. I am glad that when one did he was able to ask such a bright-eyed-and-bushy-tailed supplementary question. Of course drink-driving offences are important. The Department of Transport has a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. North that is considering whether the present laws and penalties are adequate, and it will be reporting shortly.

Crimes of Violence

17. **Sir Anthony Kershaw** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking steps to increase sentences for crimes of violence; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We receive many letters suggesting that sentence levels for crimes of violence are too low. In fact, they are increasing. Individual sentences are a matter for the courts, but the Government understand the strength of public concern about alleged over-leniency and have responded to it with clause 29 of the Criminal Justice Bill.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the judges appear to take no notice of the guidelines that are set out? Are they not losing the public's confidence, and what more can be done?

Mr. Mellor: When a well-publicised sentence appears to be over lenient, there should be a mechanism to deal with it. That is why we introduced clause 29. It is right to recognise that there has been a considerable response by the judiciary to the need to pass appropriate penalties for those convicted of violent crime. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that during the six months after the Billam judgment the proportion of rapists sentenced to over five years has almost doubled. Similarly, since 1980 the number of offenders sent to prison for robbery for more than five years has almost doubled. I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome that as a step in the right direction.

Crime (Public Assistance)

18. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further plans he has to involve the general public in the fight against crime; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) earlier.

Mr. Page: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. The House is only too well aware of the good work done by the Government in improving our laws and strengthening the police force. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is the responsibility of the individual to obey the law and, if the individual breaks the law, it is not the Government's fault, it is the individual's fault? What would my right hon. Friend suggest should be done to bring home to the parents of individuals who break the law their responsibility for teaching their children the difference between right and wrong and producing a better citizen?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. A heavy responsibility falls on parents and teachers in a society where one third of crime is committed by juveniles. The courts are enabled to fine parents for the misdemeanours of their children. My hon. Friend will have followed the steps put forward by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the nature of the curriculum.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to read the new Department of Health and Social Security study published in the May issue of the *Employment Gazette*, which confirms that under her premiership pensioners' incomes have risen at twice the rate they did in the 1970s and that pensioners are not only spending more but saving more than they have ever done? Is this not yet another real vindication of the Government's economic policies?

The Prime Minister: The article referred to received quite wide publicity in the press this morning. The Government have honoured their pledge to pensioners about the basic pension for 1 million more pensioners than there were in 1979. As the article shows, the net income, taking the total income of pensioners as a group—*[Interruption.]*—Yes, as a group—has gone up far more than the income of the population as a whole. That means that more people are retiring with occupational pensions and other income, so that prosperity is extending to all pensioners, which is exactly what we wish. I commend the article not only to Government Members but especially to Opposition Members.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister not find it fascinating that those figures for pensioners' incomes include SERPS, which she is intent on abolishing? Has the Prime Minister seen today's reports that 4 million children live in deep poverty and are more subject to serious illness, early death and low achievement than children of comparable age who are not in poor families? As these numbers are nearly double what they were in 1979 when she came to office, does not that record of increased poverty and deprivation among the most vulnerable group in our society fill her with shame?

The Prime Minister: First, the right hon. Gentleman is wrong in saying that we will abolish SERPS. He knows full well that we will not and that it was announced that we will not. As usual, he is utterly wrong. I thought he would have been pleased that more people are retiring with an occupational pension. It has been part of our policy that all people who retire should have two pensions—their basic pension plus either an occupational pension or a fall back on SERPS. That is good. I cannot think why he thinks it is bad.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman implied that the higher figure of people on supplementary benefit means that more people are in poverty. Those figures refer not only to supplementary benefit but to incomes which are 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit, which would be an income of about £167 a week. With all due respect, that is not poverty and it is absolutely absurd to say that it is.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister, in a very selective view of statistics, want to go on avoiding the truth about the immense spread of child poverty in our country? Does she really think that the £10-odd a week that is provided under DHSS regulations for young children is anything like enough to bring them up on when all evidence shows that £35 a week would be a bare minimum? Does she not agree that, with such an immense spread of poverty, her record over eight years is one of unmitigated shame?

The Prime Minister: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the report to which he refers defines poverty as incomes that are 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit. When the report first came out, or a similar report was first published, even *The Guardian* described such a definition as running counter to common sense—I am sorry, it was the *New Society* that called it running counter to common sense. *The Guardian*, which I have here, merely described it as perverse. I could not have chosen a better word myself. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that the Government's record on social security is excellent in every way.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister takes her own Government's figures of numbers of children on the supplementary benefit bare rate, there are a million more children in this country now on that bare rate than there were when she came into office. In addition, the Government have cut child benefit. Is that what she is proud of?

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. Gentleman is saying is that if we had not put up the supplementary benefit rate as much as we have there would be fewer people in poverty because the definition would be different. That is absolutely ridiculous. I remind him that supplementary benefit rates for children under five and aged 11 to 12 have increased by about 29 per cent. after inflation has been taken into account.

Mr. William Powell: Will my right hon. Friend have the opportunity today to study the latest unemployment statistics from the parliamentary constituency of Corby, in which she will notice that the year-on-year decline from 1986 to 1987 of those out of work and claiming benifit is no less than 22 per cent., and in the wards where unemployment has been highest it is up to 30 per cent.? Will my right hon. Friend recognise that the single most important reason why that has been possible is the combination of Government policies applied to an area of high unemployment?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving the House such an excellent record.

Mr. Donald Stewart: As the Secretary of State for the Environment has withdrawn the threat to dump nuclear waste on sites in England, will the Prime Minister give her guarantee that there will be no dumping of such waste in Scotland?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, there was a report that it would be no more expensive to store low-level nuclear waste with medium-level nuclear waste and we shall consider, along with NIREX, the best place to do so.

Q2. **Mr. Churchill** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Churchill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Government's Green Paper proposing further reforms of the trade unions and giving additional rights to their members has been widely welcomed by rank and file trade unionists? Is she further aware that, according to the Labour party's general secretary, Mr. Larry Whitty, basing himself on Labour party research, a majority of rank and file trade unionists no longer vote Labour? Is that any wonder, given the determination of the Labour party to scrap my right hon. Friend's popular policies in that area?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that an increasing number of trade unionists will continue to vote Conservative, and that more and more will do so. We have done more than any other Government, for rank and file trade unionists, not only in giving more powers back to them, but because real take-home pay for the man on average earnings has risen by more than 21 per cent. during the lifetime of Conservative Governments. In addition, an increasing number of employees share in the success of their companies, either through profit-sharing or share-ownership schemes, which, again, are part of our policy for extending property ever more widely among our people.

Mr. Dalyell: Was it by design, or by error, that the Prime Minister yesterday failed to read that part of the text that she had given to the press about MI5 and using information in a way that it ought not to be used?

The Prime Minister: The part of the text, which some members of the press must have given to the hon. Gentleman, was excluded because it added nothing whatever to the statement. As he has seen it, he should know.

Mr. Shersby: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to study the proposals of the London strategic policy unit for transferring the powers and responsibities for policing the Metropolis to an assembly of London councillors? Does she agree that it would be most undesirable to change the present arrangements for policing the Metropolis, and that the proposal is just one more example of the loony Left undermining the police?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It would be absolutely disastrous for impartial policing to hand over the policing of the Metropolis in the way that my hon. Friend has said that the Opposition intend to do.

Dr. Owen: In view of the Irangate inquiry now proceeding in Congress, will the Prime Minister give an assurance about whether representations were made to representatives of the British Government by those of the United States Government to provide Iran or the Contras with weapons or support? Will she give a categorical assurance that no such weapons or support were supplied either to Iran or to the Contras?

The Prime Minister: As a former Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Gentleman knows full well that we never reveal communications between Governments. He operated that policy while he was Foreign Secretary.

I have made our position on Iran clear. It is exactly the same as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary indicated in October 1984. I have also made it clear that the British Government have not authorised the supply of Blowpipe to the Contras. Our actions have been entirely consistent with our support for a political rather than a military settlement of the problems of Central America.

Q4. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Prime Minister recall that she has twice done me the courtesy of meeting me when there have been major closures in my constituency, at Gartcosh and Martin and Black? Will she bear in mind that this week MacKinnons Knitwear in Scotland issued close on 1,000 redundancy notices, yet the Secretary of State for Scotland refuses to meet me, referring me instead to a junior Minister, whom I have already met? Given that unemployment in Scotland has risen by 2,300 each month since the Prime Minister took office, will she use the opportunity in her speech in Perth next week to apologise to the Scottish people, not least for the intransigence and insensitivity of the present Secretary of State for Scotland?

The Prime Minister: The present Secretary of State for Scotland does an excellent job, as did his predecessor.

With regard to Dawson International's proposed closure of its subsidiary MacKinnons, that is a commercial decision for the company to make. Officials of the Industry Department for Scotland are in contact with the company and will help in any way possible to try to find a buyer for the business.

Mr. Powley: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention — especially as this is the day of the local elections — to the fact that the Labour-controlled Norwich city council has kept empty a house that it owns worth £100,000 for the past five and a half years? Does she agree that that is disgraceful, and that the sole solution to the problem of homelessness lies in ensuring that properties are occupied, not in keeping them empty for five and a half years?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that keeping property or land empty or unused for a very long time is a very bad use of assets. I agree with him, too, that I should be delighted if the natural consequences of voting against any council that did that were to follow.

Q5. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Prime Minister assure me that adequate funding will be made available by the Secretary of State for Wales to keep open the Lucas Industries factory at Ystradgynlais and save 700 jobs there? The Prime Minister knows that Lucas has lost orders because Honda has given instrumentation contracts to Nippon Seiki and that this is an insidious penetration of the British car market. Austin Rover has also given a contract to it. Will the Prime Minister assure me that adequate funding will be made available so that those workers can continue to work at that factory for the forseeable future?

The Prime Minister: No, and the hon. Gentleman is quite aware that the answer must be no. If funding were given automatically to every company that had the misfortune to close, money would be piled into companies that were unable to compete and far less money would then be available for building new businesses, of which Wales has many, to create the work of the future. Of course I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman about the redundancies at Lucas and I understand his concern for his constituents, but the sourcing of individual components, whether by Austin Rover or by Honda, must be their decision. If Japanese component companies are set up in this country, we set limits on the number of components that must be purchased from this country, but they must be of excellent quality and price competitive. I understand that a Lucas subsidiary hopes to establish an expansion project at Ystradgynlais. That would safeguard employment at the site, and all concerned are doing everything possible to ensure that the development proceeds.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell: On a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take all genuine points of order after business questions.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell: My point of order arises out of Questions to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman was called at Prime Minister's Question Time. I shall take all genuine points of order immediately after business questions, in their usual place.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 11 MAY—Private Members' motions.

Debate on nuclear power and the Government's decision on the CEGB's application to construct the Sizewell B power station, on a Government motion.

Motion on the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order.

TUESDAY 12 MAY—Second Reading of the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill.

Motions on the Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) (No. 2) and (No. 3) Orders.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 13 MAY — Consideration of Lords amendents to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Lord Chancellor's salary order.

THURSDAY 14 MAY—Remaining stages of the Local Government Bill.

FRIDAY 15 MAY—Debate on small firms on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 18 MAY — Opposition Day (13th Allotted Day). Subject for debate to be announced.

The House will wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Spring Adjournment on Friday 22 May until Tuesday 2 June.

Mr. Kinnock: I can see that some of the business for next week is making even the right hon. Gentleman's hair stand on end.

The first matter that I should like to raise with him relates to next Wednesday's business—consideration of Lords amendments to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill. This legislation, which would introduce a poll tax in Scotland, is widely opposed even by, as the Leader of the House knows, members of his own party. In view of that and the fact that the Government want to levy the poll tax on even the poorest in the community and would like to extend it, if they had the chance, to the rest of Britain, does not the Leader of the House think that it is wrong to guillotine debate on this legislation in the way that is proposed?

I asked the right hon. Gentleman on 9 April for a debate on the important issue of launch aid for the A330 and A340 airbus. Will he press the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement about the need to give appropriate aid to enable British Aerospace to participate in this project? Even a pre-election statement of commitment would be preferable to further slothful delay by the Government.

Will the Leader of the House ensure that the House shortly gets an opportunity to debate today's report from the Commission for Racial Equality which records the fact that black graduates experience much greater difficulty in obtaining work for which they are qualified than do white graduates? Since this very disturbing factor clearly depresses motivation as well as neglecting qualified talent, does not the right hon. Gentleman think that it would be a worthy subject for discussion in Government time?

Finally, could the Leader of the House ensure that the House is given some time to debate the statement in a written answer given by the Secretary of State for Education and Science earlier this week relating to small schools in rural areas? Since in that statement the Secretary of State gave absolutely no undertaking that schools with fewer than three teachers would not be closed and absolutely no assurance of any extra funding that might become necessary if such schools were kept open on educational grounds, I am sure that the Secretary of State would want to correct any impression that he was being helpful to small rural schools and the communities which depend on them since that obviously would not be true. Could the Leader of the House, who I know has an interest in small rural schools, see that the Secretary of State gets that redemptive opportunity?

Mr. Biffen: Taking the points of the right hon. Gentleman in the order in which they were presented, both he and I might be fairly disposed to abstinence in our rhetoric instead of using the analogy of hair standing on end.

As to the right hon. Gentleman's second point, I note what he says about the possible use of the timetable facilities for the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill. The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the main timetable motion provided for a supplementary motion to deal with Lords amendments, and I can see no reason why this cannot be introduced.

As to the question of launch aid, the Government's discussions with British Aerospace have reached an advanced stage and my right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement to the House soon.

I note the suggestion that we might have a debate on employment opportunities for black graduates in the context of the recent report of the Commission for Racial Equality. I think that might be pursued through the usual channels.

Finally, I note what the right hon. Gentleman said about the excellent statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on schools in rural areas. He was generous enough to concede that I have a lively and constituency interest in this matter. I am perfectly satisfied with it and I invite the right hon. Gentleman to follow my example.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Next Wednesday we shall debate almost exclusively Scottish business. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Scottish Conservative party conference is also beginning on that day, and the arrangement of business will make life extremely difficult for some of us who would like to be there?

Mr. Biffen: I have always thought that, if Parliament were to be sitting during the Conservative party conference, it would be a wonderful excuse to be here and not there. However, we all have our appetites and inhibitions. I take account of what my hon. Friend says, and I will look at the matter.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House has intimated that he sees no reason why the guillotine or the timetable procedure should not be used for Lords amendments on the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill. Given that there have been very few constuctive amendments in the other place and that this Session has considerable time to run, I do not find that his reason is particularly convincing and wish to hear him amplify it.

Given the cascade of Government announcements of recent weeks—perhaps with an eye to the electorate—and given the fact that we will not be here from the week beginning 25 May, can the Leader of the House anticipate any Government statements that he might have been thinking of bringing forward during that week and give the House an opportunity to discuss them before then?

Mr. Biffen: On the second point, the hon. Gentleman will have to accept the good news as it comes.

As to the first point, of course there will be a debate, possibly preparatory to the supplementary motion. The sound arguments will be made then.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Has my right hon. Friend noted that a candidate for the SDP at the last election, who was once a Member of the House, has recently spoken on a Government party platform, asking people to vote Conservative in the coming election? Will my right hon. Friend arrange to issue blanket information to Opposition Members, asking them all to come into our little ring so as to make it bigger?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure how that arises on next week's business, except that it will provide an opportunity for initial repentance on the part of Social Democratic Members if they start voting with the Government next week instead of with the Opposition.

Mr. Walter Harrison (Wakefield): May I make a special appeal to the Leader of the House? I refer him to early-day motion 860 on the future of the West Yorkshire county hall in Wakefield.

[That this House, recognising that the purpose-built County Hall, Wood Street, Wakefield has been in existence since 1898, was built and paid for and maintained by the ratepayers of the West Riding of Yorkshire and the ratepayers of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, and that it contains very valuable and unique furnishings, a marvellously panelled council chamber and all the requirements for local government and other public bodies, calls on Her Majesty's Government to instruct the West Yorkshire Residuary Body to suspend the consideration of tenders for the said County Hall and to negotiate a sale of the same to the Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and to the West Yorkshire Police Authority for their joint use.]

I have raised this issue on many occasions. I refer the Leader of the House to page 1397 of the Order Paper. There we have 152 hon. Members supporting the motion in my name. I have only one opponent; there is only one amendment. I cannot identify the constituency of my opponent because he is so unknown to me; it says that he is Mr. Gary Waller. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who?"] Mr. Gary Waller. Have hon. Members heard of him?

Does not the Leader of the House think that I should be given an opportunity next week, or possibly on the Opposition day on 18 May—here I appeal to my hon. Friends—to discuss the future of West Yorkshire county hall which is to be privatised? I appeal to the Leader of the House to give me the opportunity for a debate next week or on 18 May, the Opposition day.

Mr. Biffen: Knowing the formidable characteristics of the right hon. Gentleman as I do, I am lost in admiration for my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) that he alone can thwart the ambitions of the right hon. Gentleman. Of course I will look into the matter. I understand that it is essentially a matter for the residual body, which is a rather demeaning concept, but none the less I will consider how it might be debated.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I welcome the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that we should debate at an early opportunity village schools in rural areas. The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition has shown by his question that he does not understand how they are financed, perhaps because his party has little to do with or cares little for people in rural areas. May I point out to my right hon. Friend that it would be good to debate the announcement made by the Secretary of State for Education and Science about his attitude to village schools in rural areas because of the important part they play in the community and the importance they have for the education of children in those villages?

Mr. Biffen: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I only wish that with a song in my heart I could guarantee a debate on this topic in Government time, but I must have a prudent sense of responsibility on how I mortgage that time for the weeks ahead.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): May I refer the Leader of the House to the business for next Thursday, the Local Government Bill? On 5 February the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, in the course of a fairly lengthy statement, announced that as from midnight that day it would be illegal for local authorities, among other things, to guarantee private finance for a host of housing initiatives worth, effectively, about £500 million. That was because there was going to be this Bill, which would take retrospective powers back to 5 February to make it a legal requirement to ask permission of the Ministry to proceed with such guarantees, among other things. Should the Bill fall, in the eventuality about which we are all speculating, would it be possible for the Minister, who will be before the House on Thursday, to indicate — this is an important point — that local authorities would not be acting illegally were they to give such financial guarantees for private finance to provide housing to the extent of about £500 million throughout the country in critical areas of shortage? Would the Leader of the House undertake to get the Minister to make it perfectly clear that, should the Bill fall because of the possibility of a general election, they could go ahead and give that financial guarantee so that we could get that private capital into the housing that is needed in many parts of the country?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman very fairly conceded that he was making an important but none the less hypothetical point. However, I will most certainly see that it is drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend so that he may take account of it.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The House is probably at its best when there is ground common to both sides. I therefore support the Leader of the Opposition and my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) in making a further request for a debate on rural schools. I say this because the small Church of England school in the village of Wincle, in the hill country to the west of my constituency, has just been the subject of an inspector's report which praises it for the role which it plays and for the quality and scope of education which it provides. So that in every sense bigger is not necessarily best. As many rural schools are under threat and could well be closed by unsympathetic local education authorities, may we have a debate?

I also support the Leader of the Opposition in his call for a debate on the aerospace industry, with particular reference to launch aid for the A330 and A340 airbus. This concerns the future of our vital aerospace industry and we must match the Germans and the French in seeking to ensure its survival. I believe that the House and constituencies such as mine which have a vested interest in the future of aerospace — and I refer to British Aerospace, Woodford — want my right hon. Friend to try to find time for a debate on this critical and important issue.

Mr. Biffen: I always enjoy these Thursday tours of the Macclesfield constituency. I feel that I know it intimately and could never get lost in it. I am fascinated by my hon. Friend's commitment to consensus politics, and I am sure that we shall hear more of that in the next Parliament.

As for a debate on village schools, I assure my hon. Friend that I entirely accept the force of his arguments. It cannot be arranged for next week, but I am sure that debate will take place both indoors and out of doors, as it were.

With regard to the airbus, I am sure that if my hon. Friend reflects further on what I said to the Leader of the Opposition he will draw some encouragement from that.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I wonder whether the Leader of the House will join me in expressing pleasure that, following a small number of fairly moderate speeches by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) and myself, the sponsor of the Obscene Publications Bill drew stumps and surrendered last night. Will he comment on the attempt that was made to ram this Bill through by bringing in a sittings motion which would have had us meeting all night, if hon. Members had had the guts for it, and all day in order to have the Bill brought forward for its Report stage with only 12 hours in between? Will he give his views on that and, above all, rejoice with us that such a depressing, reactionary, ill-formed measure has been dropped and, we hope, will not appear again?

Mr. Biffen: It is quite out of character for the hon. Gentleman not to have done his homework. If he had, he would have discovered that I voted for the Second Reading of the Bill. As to the subsequent arrangements for the passage of the Bill, that is a matter for the private sector. I represent the public sector. Therefore, I cannot sensibly and honourably comment upon what happened.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): May we have a statement next week from the Attorney-General, and possibly from the Secretary of State or the Solicitor-General for Scotland, on the electoral law relating to direct mailing to targeted constituencies? During Home Office questions earlier I was not clear whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in answer to the supplementary question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), covered the situation in Scotland. The Secretary of State certainly did not refer to the Scottish National party and any legal advice it may have received. I make no allegations about the Scottish National party, but this is an important matter on which the House should be clear.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend referred to exchanges that took place earlier during questions to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. In truth, I cannot add anything to those exchanges, but I will most certainly see that his question to me is referred to the Law Officers.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Leader of the House take into account the fact that the Prime Minister's statement, which she might wish to amplify next week, has given great pain to the family and friends, such as Anthony Cavendish, of the late Sir Maurice Oldfield? I see Conservative Members nodding their heads in support. Could not people such as George Young have their questions answered about this because great pain, and possibly misunderstanding, has been created? Will the right hon. Gentleman convey to the Prime Minister the fact that I did not receive something from the press that I should not have. I read it in the press. Some of us are surprised that a statement about the possible misuse of information gained by MI5 is a matter of little consequence, adding nothing to the statement. Would she think about that?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to be given an opportunity to explain why Barrie Penrose and Roger Courtiour, two BBC journalists, interviewed Harold Wilson on the question of dirty tricks by MI5, and why the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, along with the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), and the late Airey Neave interrogated the journalists? Could some statement be made by the Chancellor?

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. On his first point, I will convey his request to No. 10. As to his second point, I will inquire of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about the matter that has been raised, and doubtless he will be in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Looking to the future, I give notice to my right hon. Friend that, unless I hear sooner, in the forthcoming debate on the Loyal Address I shall be raising with great force the future of the village schools of Easton Royal and East Grafton in my constituency, about whose future I have been trying to extract decisions from the Department of Education and Science ever since the beginning of December.

Mr. Biffen: All these exchanges show that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is blessed with the twin characteristics of sound political judgment and progressive educational instincts. I will ensure that the point is passed to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Is the Leader of the House aware that once again the future of Fulham football club has been thrown into doubt and jeopardy as a result of the irresponsible actions of Marler Estates, a company which has on a number of occasions reneged on undertakings and agreements? On this occasion a further failure to honour an agreement is causing the difficulty.

Will the right hon. Gentleman urge the Minister with responsibility for sport to come to the House next week and make a statement on the steps that the Government will take to safeguard football clubs against the actions of predatory property speculators? Will he also speak to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who as yet has not responded to a question that I raised some time ago about the possibility of there having been improper insider dealing in the shares of Marler Estates earlier this year?

Mr. Biffen: There must be scope for a private Member's Bill to convert the Fulham football club technically into a village school. That, it seems to me, is the most immediate helpful prospect of its preservation. Having once lived under its shadow, I understand that it is a matter of great seriousness in London. I will refer the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Trade and Industry respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. Friend accept that my admiration for his judgment has been nudged a little by the reply he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) when he suggested that it was preferable to be anywhere in this kingdom, for whatever reason, even a party conference, than at Perth? Since that is the place from which the Government were launched, succeeded and relaunched, and will no doubt be relaunched again, will he use his influence with the Welsh section of the Labour party to persuade it to use its thirteenth allotted day to initiate a debate on the north-south divide in order to remind the House of the immeasurable benefits of living north of the border, thanks to the Government?

Mr. Biffen: I am always anxious to make the most ample common cause with my hon. and learned Friend, so let me say that I have the utmost devotion to Perth, particularly when it is unblemished by over-zealous political activity. My hon. and learned Friend's point is one of great seriousness, and I am sure that through the usual channels we will be able to accommodate his point.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Leader of the House aware of two major financial question marks over British financing of the EEC? First, there is the court case relating to the extension of VAT to house building and construction and, secondly, there is the Delors package, which has been presented and is in the Vote Office—Com. 87/101—which takes apart the whole of the current EEC financing structure and dismantles the much trumpeted Fontainebleau agreement obtained by the Government. As it is almost certainly to be referred for debate by the Select Committee on European Legislation, will he assure the House that when the package is debated in the Council of Ministers on 25 and 26 May next, if a debate has not for some reason taken place in the House by then, Her Majesty's Ministers will give no commitment whatsoever on the grounds of the resolution of the House of which he is aware?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises a point that is substantial in its economic implication and constitutional consequences. He knows perfectly well that I can give no guarantee about the behaviour of Ministers at the council of Ministers. However, I shall certainly see that the matter is referred to my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend bring forward the traditional time for announcing rate capping for councils from July to next week, bearing in mind the extreme difficulties of people in Ealing, Waltham Forest and other areas? Will he bear in mind that I have had packed meetings throughout my constituency of hundreds of people objecting to the Ealing rate rise of 65 per cent. for domestic ratepayers and 57 per cent. for industrialists? A total of 3,500 people came on a march to Ealing town hall on the wettest day of the year when the Grand National was being shown on television, as well as the Calcutta cup. There is strong feeling and people need reassurance that wicked councils such as Ealing and others will be stopped in their tracks as soon as possible. Will he bear in mind the fact that pensioners and many others have been to my surgery and met me in the street and are deeply upset to the point of tears in facing rate bills that they know they cannot pay?

Mr. Biffen: I do not doubt for one moment the very strong feeling that has been generated by the rates issue in many parts of the country, particularly in Labour authorities which have had high spending policies. I note the request for the rate-capping announcement to be advanced somewhat dramatically to next week. My heart is with the proposition, but holding a responsibility for the management of Government business, I must say that I cannot easily see how it can be accommodated. However, I shall be in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is the Leader of the House aware that in my area the Conservative party is posing quite disingenuously as the champion of the ratepayers, yet the Government have stolen £40 million in rate support grant cuts and penalties since the Prime Minister came to office? If the Conservative party is really the champion of the ratepayer, will the right hon. Gentleman find time to give back that £40 million?

Mr. Biffen: The search for an equitable distribution of the rate support grant is one of the eternal and fascinating aspects of our national politics, and I have no doubt that it will continue.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, if he agreed to the call of the Leader of the Opposition and of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) for a debate next week about the future of small village schools, I could point out that the Government have been fairly consistent in their policy? For example, seven or eight weeks ago they saved such a school at Mugginton in my constituency, which was under threat of closure from a Labour county council.

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution, which reinforces the powerful case for an early debate on the educational and social significance of village schools in the shires, and the signal duty that has been undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of

[Mr. Biffen]

State for Education and Science in that regard. Although I cannot immediately offer such a debate, we shall certainly have one, either here or in another place.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware of reports circulating in American newspapers today to the effect that pressure has been put by the British Prime Minister on the United States President in the event of the zero—zero option being finally agreed to define Europe as mainland Europe? Britain would therefore be excluded, and all the B52s and cruise missiles would thus be located in this country. Would the right hon. Gentleman comment on the story that is circulating in the United States? More important, will he guarantee that if an announcement is made today or tomorrow, we shall have an emergency debate on the matter in Government time?

Mr. Biffen: I have always feared that the hon. Gentleman was, at heart, a trendy internationalist. I share the prejudices of his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) in that I do not regard this country as part of mainland Europe, and I shall go to the grave thinking that it is not part of mainland Europe. As to the hon. Gentleman's other points, I certainly have no responsibility for the speculations of American newspapers, and I therefore cannot help him.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House take another look at the business for next Wednesday and change it a little? First, will he give the Scottish people a reprieve by not having the debate on the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill so that the poll tax is not imposed on them? Secondly, will he ask the Lord Chancellor if he can get along on £78,000 a year for just a little longer? Instead would the right hon. Gentleman allow the House a full debate on the parliamentary control of the security services and the Government's action to prevent Peter Wright's book from being published in Australia so that the public can see exactly who controls the security services and what threat they may have been to previous Governments? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this a matter of great importance and that it is in the public interest that there be such a debate?

Mr. Biffen: I would not want to be the first, or last, person to suggest that the business for next week is fixed irrevocably and cannot be altered. However, it would be altered only after the most profound consideration and deep argument and with the utmost conviction. Therefore, I am disposed to stand firmly by the business announced for Wednesday and to disappoint the hon. Gentleman.

BILLS PRESENTED

Data Protection Act 1984 (Amendment)

Mr. Harry Cohen presented a Bill to amend the Data Protection Act 1984: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 July and to be printed. [Bill 153.]

Political Opinion Polls (Regulation)

Mr. George Foulkes, supported by Mr. Ernie Ross, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. John Maxton, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Willie W. Hamilton and Mr. Harry Cohen, presented a bill to regulate the carrying out and publication of results of public opinion polling and to set up a Supervisory Commission to oversee all aspects of political polls and their publication: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 June and to be printed. [Bill 154.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Charities (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Companies (Mergers and Divisions) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Orders of the Day

Banking Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 2, after first "or" insert

"who is, or is acting as,"

4.4 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical amendment to put it beyond doubt that the immunity in clause 1(4) extends to those members of the Bank's staff who are seconded to the Bank rather than being its permanent employees. Although not directly employed by the Bank, they act essentially as employees, and it is important that they are able to act firmly and confidentially in their supervisory duties.

As this is the first of the Lords amendments, I shall say a general word about the coming into force of the Bill's provisions. We intend that the bulk of the Bill's main provisions will come into force on 1 October this year. However, there will be an exception in the case of the large exposures reporting regime, for which a target of 1 January 1988 has been set to give the banks time to prepare their systems for compliance with the requirements. We propose, too, that the provisions on the disclosure of information should be implemented two months after the Bill receives Royal Assent to enable the Bank of England to co-operate more fully with other supervisory authorities as soon as practicable.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 21

NOTIFICATION OF NEW OR INCREASED CONTROL

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 16, line 6, leave out "which is a body corporate".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a drafting amendment which simply removes some unnecessary words to make for consistency with similar references elsewhere in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 22

OBJECTION TO NEW OR INCREASED CONTROL

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 17, line 25, leave out subsection (4).

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 4.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments correct the procedural provisions for the giving of notices of objection by the Bank of England. As drafted, the clause did not take account of the period allowed for representations to be made by a person who has acquired a controlling shareholding without clearance and is subsequently served with a preliminary notice of objection by the Bank of England. The Bank might therefore run short of time to consider the case, given that the final notice must be served with an overall time limit of three months. The purpose of the amendments is to take account of that passage of time and also to clarify the Bank's authority to require information and documents in such cases.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 4 agreed to.

Clause 26

RESTRICTIONS ON AND SALE OF SHARES

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 20, leave out lines 10 and 11.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 7.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments are designed to ensure that copies of notices of restriction made under clause 26 are sent to all those affected by the notice, which may include a number of people acting as associates. Earlier drafts of the Bill did not adequately deal with such cases and the amendments are designed to meet that question.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 20, line 16, at end insert

"in a case where the notice of objection was served under section 22 or 24 above".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical and drafting amendment and represents a correction consequential on the introduction in this House of clause 23. The decision to object on grounds of reciprocity is a matter for the Government and is not subject to appeal to the tribunal constituted under the Bill. The existing reference to allowing time for an appeal in clause 26(4) does not, therefore, apply to action under clause 23.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to.

Clause 37

NOTIFICATION OF ACQUISITION OF SIGNIFICANT SHAREHOLDING

Lords amendment: No. 8, in page 28, line 21, after "institution" insert

"incorporated in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment relates to clause 37 which deals with notification of significant shareholdings which was a measure introduced during the Bill's passage on which we had extensive debate. The clause requires shareholdings of between 5 and 15 per cent. in an authorised institution to be notified to the supervisors. Such "significant shareholders", as they are defined, are then subject to the

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

powers to require information and to mount investigations, which appear later in the Bill. However, in the same way as the Bill's requirements for shareholder controllers apply only to United Kingdom incorporated banks, which is clearly the matter of concern, the provisions of the clause were also intended to apply only to significant shareholders in United Kingdom incorporated banks. The amendment is designed to achieve that effect.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I do not wish to disagree with the amendment, but it provides a useful hook on which to hang some points of public interest. One concerns the link of the Bank of England to the £26 million Morgan Grenfell sale. According to press reports, the bankers refused to comply with a request to name a major shareholder. Given that the bank is now committed to more open disclosure of nominee shareholders to prevent abuses of the takeover code, I should like the Minister to comment on these interesting mystery shareholder stakes wherein someone has used a nominee company owned by the Bank of England to build up a stake, apparently of nearly 5 per cent., in Morgan Grenfell during the past few months. One should know exactly how and why this is happening.

To strengthen the Minister's hand and his resolve—of course, I am relying on press reports and do not necessarily have the latest information—I remind him that the Government no longer owe anything to Morgan Grenfell. More recent press reports make it clear that Morgan Grenfell will no longer countenance political payments without the prior agreement of shareholders. Last year, it funded the Tories to the tune of £25,000. No doubt, Central Office will be particularly interested in that report. Even when the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), sat on Morgan Grenfell's board, the annual payment to Conservative funds was "stolidly maintained", to quote from a press report. That only confirms the deepest suspicions of Labour Members that the right hon. Gentleman and his party are much more closely aligned with Conservative Members than with anyone else. I think that the Minister is now in a position to come clean about Morgan Grenfell and the Bank of England and exactly what is going on. I am sure that the House—it is not exactly full—will be delighted to hear what the Minister has to say.

4.15 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): As we are rattling along fairly well, I should like to make a few comments because I was a member of the Standing Committee and important questions have arisen in relation to significant shareholdings. Recently, I heard from the acceptance houses committee, a most distinguished body, which would like to make certain comments. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will give me a reply, if not immediately, then shortly after, and in writing, if necessary.

Discussion in the other place drew attention to a number of defects that were thought to exist in the Bill and could have great significance in certain circumstances. The Bill has received a great deal of support from the banking industry and there has been a great deal of helpful consultation throughout its passage.

One concern is the action that the Bank of England may take when an unwelcome shareholder announces that he has 5 per cent. of the voting capital in an authorised institution. When such a shareholder increases his holding to 15 per cent., he has to seek the approval of the Bank of England before going further. If the Bank does not consider him fit and proper, it can take quite drastic action under the Bill to prevent him from doing damage to the bank in which he holds shares.

Unfortunately, the Bill does not make it clear that the Bank of England can do anything before the 15 per cent. point is reached, even if it has already formed the view that the shareholder is not fit and proper. It seems somewhat illogical that an undesirable shareholder should be allowed to play around between 5 and 15 per cent. without interference by the central bank charged with the maintenance of the stability of the banking system. However, a number of assurances have been given in another place by Ministers that the Bank of England would not be powerless in such circumstances and would be able to warn an undesirable off the course. The important point is that there should be a proper warning system to ensure that the results that I am sure we all want —including the Government—are produced.

There is another difficulty in that the Bill does little to resolve the interaction between itself and the Financial Services Act 1986. I served on the Standing Committee on the Financial Services Bill and have viewed this matter with some interest over the past 18 months or so. The main point is that, since the passage of that legislation, it has become clear that two sets of regulations will apply in certain circumstances, which I have described, coming from two different regulatory authorities. That will cause considerable burdens for the banking system. It is hoped that the securities regulators are able to accept the Bank of England as——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. I allowed the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) to go fairly wide, but the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is going very much wider than the Lords amendment. We are dealing with Lords amendments and remarks must be addressed to them. I am sure that the hon. Member will bring his remarks into order.

Mr. Cash: The point that I wish to make—I think that I can make it briefly—is that the Bill could have contained a provision to enable the banking supervision used by the Bank of England to be equivalent to the system used by the securities regulators. It would be helpful to know how the current talks are progressing. We want to be sure that the banking system as envisaged by the amendment tabled in the Lords ensures that banking supervision operates in a way that would not be needlessly undermined by different securities regulators. I think that my hon. Friend the Minister knows the point that I am making. It has been made a number of times, so there is no need to dwell on the subject.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), drew attention to some comments that had appeared in the press about a shareholding in Morgan Grenfell and asked about the implications of that and of nominee shareholdings. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), also on significant shareholdings in

banks, pointed to the situation which applies where an individual or company owns between 5 and 15 per cent. of the share capital of the bank.

I will begin by dealing with the point that was made by the hon. Member for Thurrock about a report in the press. I suspect that that report is the same one as I saw on 29 April, which was not entirely accurate, so it may help, therefore, if I explain the provisions with regard to holdings in companies and banks in particular.

As to nominee shareholdings, under the Companies Act a company has a right to know the identity of its shareholders who are registered through nominee companies. There is an exception to that in section 216(5) which applies to certain categories of shareholders, notably Governments and Heads of State. It provides that a person is not obliged to comply with a notice to reveal identity if he is exempted under that section. That only applies up to the figure of 5 per cent., which is the same figure as applies for the purposes of the Banking Bill in relation to significant shareholders.

Until recently 5 per cent. was the figure required for disclosure in the case of a bid for a company under the rules of the Takeover Panel. That figure has been reduced to 1 per cent., but it applies under those circumstances only once a bid has been announced. For this purpose it is not relevant to the case that the hon. Member for Thurrock has raised.

The nominee position runs out when a shareholding reaches 5 per cent., so at that point there is no further protection on anonymity and, at the same time, any holding of 5 per cent. or more would trigger the provisions that we have included in the Banking Bill. The Bank of England, as supervisor, would have to be notified of a holding to be able to keep a check on significant shareholdings in authorised institutions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford repeated some comments that he had made in the earlier stages of the progress of the Bill. He said that there was little of effect that could be done if a shareholding lay between 5 and 15 per cent. In practice, that is not a fair description of the position, because any undesirable shareholders, to be able to own and take advantage of a shareholding of 15 per cent. or more, would have to satisfy, at that stage, the Bank of England as supervisor that they were fit and proper to be controlling shareholders of an authorised banking institution. That would mean that their conduct as a shareholder of an amount of the capital of that bank that is lower than 15 per cent. but above 5 per cent. would be directly relevant. We have included provisions in the Bill for the Bank of England to be able to obtain relevant information from such a significant shareholder.

To use a phrase that I used earlier in the proceedings of the Bill, the strengthening of the 15 per cent. hurdle, which we accomplished by making it apply not just at the time of acquisition of the 15 per cent. but continuously thereafter, casts its shadow back to the time before the shareholder reaches the figure of 15 per cent. That gives an effective preliminary opportunity for the Bank of England to monitor the conduct and behaviour of a shareholder who may aspire to become a controlling shareholder.

It would be wrong to set a figure lower than 15 per cent. for the strong measures that are in the Bill. After all, they enable voting rights, or even ownership, to be divested, which are very powerful measures. If one had a figure significantly lower than 15 per cent. one could only accompany it by rather weaker measures, and I would not be in favour of that.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend look into the question that has been raised that the securities regulators do not seem to be able to accept the Bank of England's method of consolidated supervision under which the capital of the banking conglomerate stands behind its engagements. It appears that it is insisting on a surfeit allocation of capital to each separate business that is undertaken. Talks are occuring on this question, but perhaps my hon. Friend will drop me a note about it.

Mr. Stewart: I will certainly look into that. It is a separate point from the one that we have been discussing, but since it has been raised I will comment on it.

I know that there is the question of capital adequacy calculations under the different supervisory regimes, but I am anxious that a sensible solution should be found to this. Any institutions which are affected or potentially affected by the different regimes and are concerned about it should not hesitate to make their views known and put their comments to the supervisors concerned. I hope that by so doing they will enable a reasonable and workable basis to be found between the two.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 39

POWER TO OBTAIN INFORMATION AND REQUIRE PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 9, in page 31, line 39, leave out "or subsidiary" and insert ", subsidiary or related company".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 10, 12 to 17 and 55.

Mr. Stewart: These amendments slightly widen the power under clause 39 for obtaining information by including "a related company" among the connected companies from which information and documents can be obtained. A "related company" is defined in the Companies Act as a company in which the authorised institutions hold 20 per cent. or more of the nominal value of the shares in the company.

The amendments widen the reach of the powers of investigators appointed under clause 41 to include companies in which the authorised institution or its shareholder controllers have a 20 per cent. or more stake, rather than just 50 per cent. as is the case in the Bill as it stands. These amendments were originally put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on Third Reading.

The amendments reflect suggestions that have been made by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. The Government undertook to consider them and subsequently concluded that a widening along the lines of these amendments would be desirable. Therefore, such amendments were able to be included in the proceedings of the Bill in another place.

Dr. McDonald: The Minister will know that we welcomed these amendments when they were moved in the other place, but we note that they go pretty wide. It is

[Dr. McDonald]

proper that an investigation should be thoroughly carried out and should include related companies as well. The Minister will know that companies may, for one reason or another, find themselves over 20 per cent. owned by an authorised institution, perhaps as a result of underwriting.

The amendment is a wide one, but nevertheless the Opposition accepted these amendments in the other place and realised that investigations must be able to be carried out as thoroughly as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 10 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 32, line 19, after "information" insert "or documents"

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

It alters subsection (9) of the clause by empowering the Bank of England to require the provision of documents as well as information from a director, controller of manager to assist it to determine whether that person is fit and proper. This brings the subsection in the clause into line with the other provisions in the Bill relating to the obtaining of information and to investigations, all of which include powers to require the furnishing of documents.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 12 to 17 agreed to.

Clause 4

INVESTIGATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE BANK

Lords amendment: No. 18, in page 34, line 4, after "every" insert

"person who is or was a".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 19.

4.30 pm

Mr. Stewart: The amendments correct omissions from the Bill as originally drafted. They relate to clause 41, which deals with investigations into the affairs of authorised institutions by inspectors appointed for the task by the Bank of England when it believes that an investigation is necessary in the interests of depositors. Subsection (5) imposes a duty on the directors, managers and controllers of an institution under investigation and on others closely connected with its business to co-operate with the inspectors. The analogous provision, section 17 of the 1979 Act, applied that duty also to people who were in such positions as well as to those who continued to be in such positions but were no longer at the time that the investigation took place. The drafting of the replacement provision in clause 41 did not include that, and we have taken this opportunity of correcting it.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 19 agreed to.

Clause 43

POWERS OF ENTRY IN CASES OF SUSPECTED CONTRAVENTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 20, in page 36, line 44, after "to" insert "laying an".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 21, 37 and 52.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments are technical drafting ones that improve the Bill in its application to Northern Ireland. I am advised that in clause 43, to which the amendments relate, the correct usage is to refer to laying information and making a complaint. Amendments Nos. 20 and 21 reflect that usage. In clause 79, the reference to Article 296 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 should, to be more exact, be Article 296(2). In clause 89, the reference to that order should have included the word "arrangement". Amendments Nos. 37 and 52 respectively correct those points of drafting.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 21 agreed to.

Clause 45

AUDITED ACCOUNTS TO BE OPEN TO INSPECTION

Lords amendment: No. 22, in page 37, line 24, at end insert—

"( ) In the case of an institution incorporated in the United Kingdom the accounts referred to in subsection (1) above include the auditors' report on the accounts and, in the case of any other institution whose accounts are audited, the report of the auditors."

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Amendment No. 22 relates to clause 45 and requires an authorised institution to keep at each of its offices in the United Kingdom at which it holds itself out as accepting deposits not only its audited accounts but the auditors' report on the accounts. The amendment was suggested by the Opposition in Committee in another place, and I am glad to confirm that it is an acceptable improvement to the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 47

COMMUNICATION BY AUDITOR ETC. WITH THE BANK

Lords amendment: No. 23, in page 38, line 41, leave out "shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either"

and insert

"no such regulations shall be made unless a draft of them has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each"

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Amendment No. 23 fulfills an undertaking that I gave on Report. At the time, I agreed that, if the Government wished to introduce rules specifying the circumstances in which the auditors of authorised institutions should communicate information to supervisors, as the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) suggested, it would be more appropriately dealt with by affirmative

resolution of both Houses of Parliament. Again, I am happy to agree to that. I am glad that the provision has been able to be included in the Bill.

Dr. McDonald: My remarks will be even briefer on amendment No. 23. I thank the Economic Secretary for ensuring that the amendment that I proposed in Committee has been put forward in the other place and is now part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 58

COMPENSATION PAYMENTS TO DEPOSITORS

Lords amendment: No. 24, in page 44, line 7, leave out "end of the deposit's original term to maturity"
and insert
"deposit is or becomes due and payable under the terms on which it was made".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 25, 26, and 28 to 34.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments relate to clauses 58 and 60, dealing with technical aspects of the administrator procedure. That procedure was introduced by the Insolvency Act 1985. It has recently come into force for the generality of companies, but as yet does not apply to banks. It will do so in due course when secondary legislation under the Insolvency Act is laid.

The Bill, with a view to that order being made in due course, provides for the deposit protection arrangements to apply in respect of deposits with an institution, subject to an administration order. The amendments relate to the way in which calculations are made with regard to deposits and the amount of compensation payable in an administered institution. The amendments were accepted unopposed in another place. They are a useful piece of forward planning in relation to the application of the Insolvency Act provisions and the administration procedure in the case of banks.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 25 and 26 agreed to.

Clause 59

MEANING OF INSOLVENCY

Lords amendment: No. 27, in page 46, line 5, at end insert
"or on the making of a winding-up order against it by virtue of section 90 below".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

It is designed to remedy a gap in the circumstances in which the deposit protection fund is brought into play when a Scottish partnership is wound up. It ensures that the deposit protection fund is triggered when an institution that is a Scottish partnership is wound up by the court on the petition of the Bank of England under clause 90. At present, the drafting is defective in that respect. The position of partnerships in the rest of the United Kingdom is already covered, but for the sake of completeness it is wise to make provision for what I hope will be an exceedingly rare occasion, if it ever arises at all.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 28 to 34 agreed to.

Clause 66

TAX TREATMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND REPAYMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 35, in page 52, line 47, after "an" insert "allowable".

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I should inform the House that the amendment involves privilege.

Mr. Stewart: After that ominous warning I must tell the House that the amendment was proposed, for the sake of clarification, by the Opposition in another place. It is designed to make clear that contributions to the deposit protection fund could be deducted from taxable profits. Although I was advised that clause 66 did not need amendment, there is no harm in the amendment. If it could conceivably assist in the avoidance of doubt, I am happy for it to be included in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 74

MEANING OF "OVERSEAS INSTITUTION" AND "REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE"

Lords amendment: No. 36, in page 59, line 13, at end insert
"; and 'establishment', in relation to such an office, includes the making of any arrangements by virtue of which such activities are promoted or assisted from it."

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Under the Bill, an overseas bank proposing to establish a representative office in the United Kingdom is required to give not less than two months' notice to the Bank of England. As the Bill stood, an overseas bank would not clearly be required to give such notice if it entered into an arrangement with an agent that had already established premises here for the purpose of conducting representative activities through that agent. Therefore, the amendment closes a potential loophole in the requirement to report establishment of a representative office. It is not a loophole which, under current circumstances, is likely to be exploited, but it is wise to close it now because it may well be that, in future, further arrangements will need to be made with regard to representative offices, and it would be unfortunate if the Act, as it would then be, did not cover that point.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 37 agreed to.

Clause 84

DISCLOSURE FOR FACILITATING DISCHARGE OF FUNCTIONS BY OTHER SUPERVISORY AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment: No. 38, in page 63, line 4, column 2, leave out "section 431, 432, 442, 446, 447 or 448" and insert "Part XIV".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43.

Mr. Stewart: Amendments Nos. 38, 39, 42 and 43 extend the purposes for which the Bank of England can disclose supervisory information to the Secretary of State for the purpose of investigations under the Companies Act 1985. As presently drafted, clause 84(1) allows disclosure by the Bank to the Secretary of State only to assist him with some of his powers under part XIV of the Companies Act, which deals with investigation of companies and their affairs. While it is unlikely that disclosure will be necessary in many of the remaining cases, it is not impossible. The amendments therefore replace the references to specific sections of part XIV of the Companies Act and the equivalent Northern Ireland order, with reference to the whole of part XIV and its Northern Ireland equivalent.

Amendment No. 40 adds to the list of supervisory persons to whom the information may be disclosed a person appointed by the Secretary of State to obtain a company's books or papers under section 44 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982.

Amendment No. 41 arises as a consequence of the approach adopted by the draftsmen in the Building Societies Act 1986.

As a whole, these are a rather miscellaneous list of technical tidyings-up of clause 84 on disclosure to other supervisors, and while I would not try to exaggerate their importance, they tidy up an important clause in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 39 to 43 agreed to.

Clause 87

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION OBTAINED UNDER OTHER ACTS

Lords amendment: No. 44, in page 67, line 1, leave out subsection (2).

4.45 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 45 to 50.

Mr. Stewart: These are minor, technical, drafting amendments that deal with cross-references to the Companies Act and the Financial Services Act 1986.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 45 to 50 agreed to.

New Clause

ELECTRONIC TRANSFER OF FUNDS

Lords amendment: No. 51, after clause 88, insert the following new clause—

"—. After section 187(3) of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 (arrangements to be disregarded in determining whether a consumer credit agreement is to be treated as entered into in accordance with prior or in contemplation of future arrangements between creditor and supplier) there shall be inserted—

'(3A) Arrangements shall also be disregarded for the purposes of subsections (1) and (2) if they are arrangements for the electronic transfer of funds from a current account at a bank within the meaning of the Bankers' Books Evidence Act 1879.'"

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment involves a new clause that is designed to clarify the existing law as it affects banking transactions carried out with the latest technology. Without the amendment, there would have been some uncertainty about the position under the Consumer Credit Act of electronic transactions on a current account by means of a plastic card. It can be difficult for the law to keep pace with such changes, and the amendment, which is designed to remove a possible constraint on the development of an important project in electronic banking — electronic funds transfer at point of sale—was and is welcome, and I am glad that it has been incorporated in the Bill. It is one item to which the banks attach considerable importance in planning their developments in the area, and for that reason it has been taken ahead of other matters that have been referred to the review of banking services law in general.

Dr. McDonald: I do not wish to oppose the amendment. Nevertheless, it is somewhat surprising to find legal obstacles to the introduction of EFTPOS being dealt with at this stage of the Bill, and, as the hon. Gentleman has just said, in advance of a full review of banking services. He will no doubt be aware that consumer associations and consumers in general may have certain anxieties about the way in which such systems may operate, and may be concerned about whether their interests are properly protected. I want to put on record the fact that the Opposition, while not opposing the amendment, express doubts about the wisdom of removing legal obstacles without ensuring that sufficient consumer protection has been built into the legislation. I should be interested to know what thought has been given to that matter.

I understand that the banks wish to move ahead with EFTPOS, and that this is an opportunity to remove any possible legal obstacles, doubts or misgivings, but the Government have not paid sufficient regard to consumer protection in this case.

Mr. Stewart: I note what the hon. Lady has said. I am glad that she did not oppose the provision, which was discussed in the Government's original White Paper and has therefore had a wider currency than other matters relating to the law as it affects the relationship between banks and their customers.

As far as I am aware, there is no decisive reason on grounds of consumer protection why we should not go ahead with the provision now, particularly because if we do not plans for the arrangements would be put back, possibly for an indefinite period. The review of the banking services law will examine the whole area and now that the provision has been incorporated in the Bill the banks will be able to take that into account in considering other related matters concerning the transfer of funds and the interests of consumers. However, I take the hon. Lady's point.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 52 agreed to.

New Clause

POWERS FOR SECURING RECIPROCAL FACILITIES FOR BANKING AND OTHER FINANCIAL BUSINESS

Lords amendment: No. 53, after clause 89, insert—

"For the avoidance of doubt it is hereby declared that a notice under section 183 of the Financial Services Act 1986

(disqualification or restriction of persons connected with overseas countries which do not afford reciprocal facilities for financial business) may be served on any person connected with the country in question who is carrying on or appears to the Secretary of State or the Treasury to intend to carry on in, or in relation to, the United Kingdom business of any of the descriptions specified in subsection (1) of that section whether or not it is of the same description as that affected by the less favourable terms which are the occasion for the service of the notice."

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss Lords amendment No. 56.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments relate to a point raised by my noble Friend Lord Elton during debate on Report in another place. The question which then arose was whether the drafting of section 183 of the Financial Services Act 1986 was sufficiently clear. That section deals with reciprocity and provides the Government with reserve powers, the purpose being to secure reciprocal access for British firms in overseas markets. It allows for the refusal, the restriction or the removal of authorisation to carry on banking, investment or insurance business in the United Kingdom if the country of origin of the institution concerned does not allow reciprocal access in those areas to British institutions.

The intention has always been that these powers should operate in such a way that action could be taken against, for example, a banking institution on the grounds of lack of access to investment or insurance markets, or vice versa. This is known as a cross-functional approach, and it gives the necessary degree of flexibility for the powers to achieve their objective.

It was considered that the present wording of the provision is ambiguous and that it is insufficiently clear whether cross functionality would apply if challenged, and the new clause was introduced to put the matter beyond doubt. The related amendment to clause 108, No. 56, ensures that as the new clause is a clarification of existing legislation it will come into effect immediately following the Bill's enactment.

Mr. Cash: I am glad to note that the new clause begins "For the avoidance of doubt".

This is a matter upon which there should be no doubt, and the provision goes to the centre of gravity of the "playing field". I refer to the way in which reciprocity between nations—I have in mind specially Japan and the United States — operates in the international securities and banking markets. It is essential that we have such a provision, and I greatly welcome it. I think that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will recall that I tabled a series of amendments in Committee, which provoked a certain amount of comment in the press and elsewhere at the time which argued strongly for adequate reciprocity. I am delighted that the Government have taken the steps that they have and that my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry went recently to Japan to discuss these very matters with those responsible in that country.

There is also the general question of the GATT round and the manner in which bilateral arrangements and agreements are entered into. We cannot work on the basis that the Japanese, or other countries that have enormous capitalisation at their disposal, are in a position to do a Monty Python on our banking system. It is essential that the amendment should be agreed to. I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has adopted it.

Mr. Stewart: I welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). It is important that we have in place provisions that will be seen to be able to work if they need to be brought into play. If there were any legal doubt that they could be implemented, they would fail in much of their purpose, which is to encourage the countries in which British financial institutions may want to operate to offer the same access to our banks and insurance companies, for example, as we offer them by way of a welcome to the City. Doubt had been cast upon that and we want to make it clear that we have relevant provisions in the Bill and in the Financial Services Act, and that such provisions, if they had to be brought into force, would be effective and would enable us to take appropriate action.

As I have said during earlier stages in our consideration of the Bill, we hope that we shall not have to implement these provisions. Our purpose is to open up foreign financial markets rather than to close the City, or British financial markets, to foreign institutions. It is clearly right that the relevant provisions in our legislation by way of reserve powers should be effective if ever they have to be used. Although the new clause is designed for the avoidance of doubt, it adds strength to our commitment and will make it clear to all outside that we want to have provisions of this sort and that we want them to be right, so that if they have to be used they will be effective in practice.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 103

MEANING OF "DIRECTOR", "CONTROLLER" "MANAGER", AND "ASSOCIATE"

Lords amendment: No. 54, in page 76, line 45, leave out from "has" to "that" in line 48 and insert

"with any other person an agreement or arrangement with respect to the acquisition, holding or disposal of shares or other interests in that body corporate or under which they undertake to act together in exercising their voting power in relation to it".

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is designed to tidy up the definition of an associate for the purposes of identifying controllers and significant shareholders. It follows on changes made on Report in this place, especially the introduction of a requirement for notification to the Bank of England by persons who become significant shareholders—that is to say, shareholders with 5 per cent. but less than 15 per cent. of the voting power of an institution in the United Kingdom or of another institution of which it is a subsidiary.

This addition to the Bill has resulted in the Bank of England being required to pay more attention to persons who may be acting in concert for the purpose of acquiring shares, even though they may not be seeking to control the institution through the joint exercise of voting power. The effect of the amendment is to include within the definition of associate for the purpose of grouping persons who are, in effect, concert parties, those who agree or arrange to buy shares together or to dispose of them together. The

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

subsection had already provided that associates included those who exercised their voting power together, and that provision is retained.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 55 and 56 agreed to.

Schedule 1

THE BOARD OF BANKING SUPERVISION

Lords amendment: No. 57, in page 79, line 29, at end insert

"provided always that there shall be a majority of independent members on the Board."

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

It has always been the Government's intention that the independent members of the Board of Banking Supervision should be in a majority, and that is accepted by the Bank of England. The provision that is set out in paragraph 3 of the schedule gives a degree of flexibility to change the total number of board members if it proved desirable to do so in future. That is subject to the baseline of six independents and three ex-officio members, which is set out in clause 2. That flexibility was never intended to undermine the policy of retaining a majority of independent members. In the other place an Opposition amendment was tabled, which was accepted by the Government, to make clear on the face of the Bill that there would always be a majority of independent members of the Board of Banking Supervision, notwithstanding any future changes in the number of board members.

I am happy to report back to the House that the provision has been included in the amendments to the Bill. As I have said, it was our intention, on the ground of policy, that that should be so. Having it spelt out in the Bill will make that doubly clear.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I welcome the opportunity to support this amendment. Modest though it is, it is regarded by most people who have followed this Bill as implicit in the previous provisions. I ask my hon. Friend whether, during the passage of this Bill or when it left the House after the Third Reading, there have been any further discussions to which he has been privy within the Bank of England or with the Governor about the role, composition and activities of the Board of Banking Supervision. My hon. Friend will recall that the composition of the independent ex officio board, the way in which the members' activities will evolve and the influence they could bring to bear on the Governor were matters of deep concern to the Members who took an interest in the passage of this Bill. One would like to feel that the tenor of what we said about the opportunity that has arisen to evolve their practices has had some impact since the matter was debated previously. Can my hon. Friend add anything to that?

Mr. Stewart: I am happy to acknowledge that there were valuable debates in Committee, on Report and on Second Reading about the role of the independent members of the Board of Banking Supervision. My hon. Friend has asked me whether further thought has been given to this. Certainly it has. As he will know, we have introduced amendments to provide that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England will have joint responsibility, which each of them recognises, to ensure that people appointed to the Board of Banking Supervision are effectively able to carry out the job which the Bill entrusts to them. Further thought has been given and will continue to be given to this as the supervisory framework of financial institutions emerges and becomes clearer.

The passage of time — every month that goes past brings more experience — shows that, although the process of supervision of financial institutions is complex, it will have to be very closely co-ordinated between supervisers in banking and other parts of the financial sector.

The Board of Banking Supervision will not come into force as a legal entity until the provisions of the Bill are enacted and become operative later this year. In the meantime, it has been found useful that the Board of Banking Supervision, in escrow as it were, is operating, bringing experience and making a critical assessment of what is needed in the changing circumstances of the financial sector for the benefit of the supervisors in the Bank of England.

I assure my hon. Friend that the debates on the Bill have been noted, both by the Bank of England as the supervisory authority and by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor who is responsible for the legislation under which it is established and who will, under the amended provisions of the Bill, have joint responsibility with the Governor for making such appointments.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule 6

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

5 pm

Lords amendment: No. 58, in page 91, line 2, at end insert—

"*The Finance Act 1986*

In Schedule 7 to the Finance Act 1986—

(a) in paragraphs 8(1) and 11(1)*(c)* for the words 'a recognised bank or licensed institution (within the meaning of the Banking Act 1979)' there shall be substituted the words 'an institution authorised under the Banking Act 1987';

(b) in paragraph 8(2) for the words 'recognised bank or licensed institution' there shall be substituted the words 'authorised institution'."

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

It remedies an omission dealing with consequential amendments to other legislation. It substitutes references to institutions authorised under the Bill for references to recognise banks or licensed institutions. That was the terminology used in the Banking Act 1979, which this Bill will supersede. The latter definitions will no longer be relevant once this Bill becomes operative.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 58 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 59, in page 91, line 27, after "54(4)" insert "and (5)".

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we will discuss amendment No. 60.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Amendments 59 and 60 relate to schedules 6 and 7. They have the effect of deleting clause 54(5) of the Building Societies Act 1986 which, together with subsection (4), made provision for disclosure of banking supervisory information to the Building Societies Commission by the Bank of England pending the coming into force of the relevant provisions of this Bill. As soon as this Bill is enacted and comes into force, those provisions of the Building Societies Act 1986 will be superseded, and amendments 59 and 60 deal with that.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 60 agreed to.

Title

Lords amendment: No. 61, in line 4, after "descriptions" insert

"to amend section 187 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 in relation to arrangements for the electronic transfer of funds; to clarify the powers conferred by section 183 of the Financial Services Act 1986;"

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is to the long title of the Bill and is consequential upon amendments 51, 53 and 56, which have been dealt with.

The proceedings on the Bill at all stages in this House and in another place have been carried through constructively. I thank all my hon. Friends who were members of the Standing Committee and the hon. Lady the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and her hon. Friends who took part in the Committee for the way in which they have approached this important legislation. It is far from being the most contentious of Bills which has been before the House this Session, but it is neccessary, along with the Building Societies Act 1986 and the Financial Services Act, to provide the basis for modernising and updating the supervisory arrangements for the financial sector. It is an important advance on the Banking Act 1979.

I hope that, having had the opportunity of observing and operating the Banking Act for the past seven or eight years, we have been able to take account of lessons learned and have made provision for a rapidly changing financial sector. It is of great importance to the economy, but it must be properly regulated and supervised. This Bill is designed to do that. I thank all those in this House and in another place who have contributed constructively to its passage.

Dr. McDonald: I rise, not to comment on the amendment, but to thank the Minister for his remarks and to say that Opposition Members, both here and in another place, have been glad of the opportunity to improve the legislation. Members of all parties have an interest in seeing that banks are properly supervised, and the legislation which will shortly be on the statute book provides much of the necessary framework for that.

The main point now, as the Minister well knows, will be how the Bank of England uses the powers conferred on it by this legislation. We trust that the Bank will keep a close watch on banking institutions. It has already looked into the conduct of some banks, notably the investigation currently under way into the Standard Chartered Bank, which we hope the Bank of England will be able to bring to a conclusion successfully once this legislation is fully operative.

Question put and agreed to.

Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.
[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair.*]

New Clause 1

ENTERTAINMENT LICENCES: REMOVAL OF CERTAIN EXEMPTIONS

'The following premises, namely—
(a) the Theatre Royal Haymarket, and
(b) the Royal Albert Hall,
shall cease to be exempt from the requirement for a public entertainment licence under paragraph 1 of Schedule 12 to the London Government Act 1963.'—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*
Brought up, and read the First time.

5.8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 3.

Mr. Hogg: The new clause, incomprehensible as it sounds on the face of it, is an important and interesting piece of legislation which owes its appearance largely to the enterprise and enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan). I am, therefore, particularly pleased to see him in his place and I hope that he will speak to the new clause which, as I say, owes much to his work.

It might be helpful if I were to tell the House something about the purpose, effect and background of the legislation, because it must be admitted that it is rather bizarre.

The new clause and the amendment relate to the exemptions from the licensing requirements of paragraph 1 of schedule 12 to the London Government Act 1963, which, as the House will know, is the public entertainments licensing code for London. Paragraph 1(1) of schedule 12 requires the licensing by London borough councils — formerly the GLC — of premises used for public dancing or music and any other public entertainment of the like kind. Paragraph 1(6) provides exemptions from the licensing requirements for the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Covent Garden Opera House, the Theatre Royal Haymarket and the Royal Albert Hall and for any entertainment lawfully held by virtue of letters patent or licence of the Crown. The new clause provides for the removal of the exemption for, first, the Royal Albert Hall, and to require it, for the first time, to be licensed for public music and dancing; and, secondly, the Theatre Royal Haymarket, which, despite the specific exemption, holds a music and dancing licence.

Amendment No. 3 is a consequential amendment of schedule 4, the repeals schedule, to repeal the references to the Theatre Royal Haymarket and the Royal Albert Hall in paragraph 1(6) of schedule 12 to the 1963 Act.

I agreed in Committee to consider an amendment which would have the effect of requiring the Royal Albert Hall, for the first time, to conform to the music and dancing requirements contained in schedule 12 to the London Government Act 1963. That is why we have brought the new clause and the amendment forward.

The Bill as it stands, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East so rightly pointed out, creates an anomaly. Clause 42 introduces new licensing requirements for indoor sports premises in London. The Royal Albert Hall is not to be exempted from licensing under clause 42 and it will be subject to licensing controls for all indoor sports entertainments to which the public are invited as spectators. Because of the exemption for the Albert Hall in the 1963 Act licensing code for music and dancing entertainments, the result is that a tennis tournament or boxing match at the hall will be subject to licensing requirements whereas the last night of the Proms, or any other concert, will not. That is bizarre, paradoxical and unjustifiable, and my hon. Friend and, to be fair, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), objected. I agreed with them and said that I would explore the legal position with a view to bringing forward an amendment.

The public are right to expect such premises to satisfy standards on a musical occasion as much as on a sporting occasion. The purpose, and, I hope, the effect, of the new clause and the amendment is to correct the anomaly.

5.15 pm

As I have already said, the Royal Albert Hall is not the only premises exempt from the music and dancing licensing controls. Others are the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, the Royal Covent Garden Opera House, the Theatre Royal Haymarket and any entertainment lawfully held by virtue of letters patent or licence of the Crown. The exemption for the Theatre Royal Haymarket appears to be derived from an 18th century exemption in respect of the Old King's Theatre in the Haymarket, but the present Theatre Royal does, in fact, hold an entertainments licence. So the opportunity is taken here to amend the licensing exemption in order to bring the law into line with the facts.

As I said I would in Committee, we have also looked at the possibility of removing the other exemptions in respect of any entertainment lawfully held by virtue of letters patent or licence of the Crown. In the course of our inquiries we discovered at least one bizarre fact—that nobody knows what meaning is to be given to the phrase "licence of the Crown". Despite the most assiduous research by my officials, for which I am extremely grateful, the phrase "licence of the Crown" appears to have no very certain meaning. Indeed, it is just possible that it has no meaning at all, in which case it will not be unique if that piece of legislation is meaningless in any statutory sense. However, there it is. We have explored it and we do not know what it means, for which we are all sorry. There is also the question of letters patent.

We have had to come to the conclusion that, for a variety of reasons, it is not possible for us to remove the general exemptions in the legislation. It may be possible to bring the premises, which are within the general exemptions, under statutory control when used for public music and dancing entertainment, but it has not proved possible to do so in this statute, although it is not for lack of wanting to do so. Therefore, we shall be exploring whether more suitable opportunity can be found.

However, there is good news. The House should note that as theatres both the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and Covent Garden are subject to conditions imposed by Westminster city council which are designed to ensure the safety of the public. The formal requirements of a theatre licence do not apply, as they are treated as special cases

under the Theatres Act 1968 by virtue of their letters patent. That may be a curious situation, but the fact is that if and when those theatres are used for public music and dancing entertainments, as opposed to theatrical performances, no conditions apply. In the unlikely event that either the Theatre Royal Drury Lane or the Royal Opera House Covent Garden staged a public indoor sport event—the mind boggles at the prospect—the premises would be subject to the licensing controls that have hitherto applied under the 1963 Act licensing code.

There is an anomaly, and we must confess that it cannot be justified. However, there is no reason to believe that any of the premises now exempt from entertainment licensing pose any hazard to the public. My officials—to whom, again, I am grateful—have carried out inquiries of the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, and have been assured that the standard of fire precautions at the exempted premises is satisfactory.

While it is extremely difficult to justify this absurd anomaly, I believe that the House and the general public are extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East, who first pointed out the problem during the Committee stage of the Bill. We should undoubtedly try to correct it. If the House approves the new clause and the amendment, we shall be able to correct the anomaly in relation to the Theatre Royal Haymarket and the Royal Albert Hall, and I hope that the House will decide to accept them. On the other hand, I fear that it will not be possible, at least on this occasion, to correct it in respect of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane or the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. I hope that we shall revert to the matter on a subsequent occasion.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): I know that this subject has created a good deal of interest. Indeed, after the outstanding presentation by my hon. Friend the Minister, there are now twice as many hon. Members in the Chamber. That is because of the importance of the new clause, the concern that is felt about this remarkable anomaly and the need to address in some detail—as I hope we shall do—the revelation that no one knows what "licence of the Crown" means. The matter is extremely serious. I realise that it will need further examination, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will re-examine it outside the ambit and remit of the Bill. In view of the considerable expertise available to him both here and in his Department, I am certain that he will be able to consider the matter in detail and come up with some historic assessment and analysis carried out with penetrating wisdom, and that he will write to me in due course with his findings about those three aspects of it. I hope that that will be possible in the not too distant future, so that during the next Parliament we shall have the opportunity to address the question further, look again at those two important historical venues and possibly amend current legislation there and then to rectify the remarkable misunderstanding over the phrase "licence of the Crown".

Having said that, and having reinforced my gratitude for the lucid explanation of the new clause by my hon. Friend the Minister, I feel that it would be timely to assess in detail the background reasons for my having drawn this important issue to the attention of the Front Bench and the House in general, both in Committee and here. Many hon. Members are very concerned about the implication of the new clause, not least because of the importance that it has for sporting promotions in the Royal Albert Hall. It is well known that my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is a lover of sport: indeed, he has spent many an enjoyable evening at the Albert Hall watching first-rate promotions. Like other hon. Members, he will be very surprised to hear that the law perceives boxing to be more in need of tougher fire controls than a completely full house for, say, the last night of the Proms — although that involves far more serious problems associated with access and exit routes and the possible reaction of large numbers of people to a fire breaking out.

Until my hon. Friend so wisely re-examined the matter, completely different criteria were placed on the same venues in regard to events when far fewer persons were present. A clear anomaly would have been created about the fire risk in a specific venue, which is intrinsic to the venue, not to the sporting performance or entertainment taking place there. That is why, during the Committee stage, I moved an amendment to paragraph 2 of schedule 3, which relates to music and dancing licences. I suggested that after the words "paragraph 1" the following words should be inserted:

"in subparagraph (6) the words 'or the Royal Albert Hall' shall be omitted".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 23 April 1987; c. 41.]

I intended in the first instance to welcome the removal of the exemption for boxing and wrestling licences for the Royal Albert Hall. I am sure that all hon. Members welcome that, because we all know that it will improve the safety requirements and provision affecting members of the public attending any promotion. Any measure that puts public safety first must surely be supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

However, in welcoming the removal of the exemption, the Committee recognised that an anomaly would be created, in that the premises would still not require a licence for music and dancing. Indeed, if the Bill had been enacted in its original form, it would have meant premises requiring a licence for a tennis match, when the hall might be half empty, but not for the last night of the Proms, when it might be packed to capacity. It seemed to me, and to other hon. Members on both sides of the House, that the drafting of the Bill as it stood, and the fact that we had not faced up to the requirement for the amendment and the new clause, would make nonsense of the legislation.

It was suggested that the Royal Albert Hall should also lose its exemption for the need for a music and dancing licence, and that important issue formed the second part of the amendments that I tabled in Committee. Theatre and entertainment licences ensure that safety regulations are brought up to scratch. It is therefore important for us to address the reason for four major cultural venues in London being exempt from such licences, and thus, implicitly, from the options of ensuring, through the local authorities, that the regulations for fire and safety were not up to scratch. I am glad to say that the point has now been addressed in respect of two of those four venues.

The new clause covers the Theatre Royal Haymarket and the Royal Albert Hall, but I am very worried that the new clause does not cover the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. It is important to consider why they have not been included in the Bill. No major sporting occasions have been held in the Theatre Royal Drury Lane or in the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. Indeed, pitch and putt competitions at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden are unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Shame.

5.30 pm

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman says, "Shame". Other hon. Members will probably support him, because they believe that there should be sporting functions at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. Those two venues have been excluded because the Bill is first and foremost about safety at sporting venues, and we have yet to see sporting events at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

Nevertheless, the House must consider why those four venues do not, for historical reasons and because of letters patent, come within the law. The safety of these venues is of paramount importance, and an accurate interpretation of the phrase "licence of the Crown" should recognise that safety must come first at any venue. Nobody would argue that because of historical precedent or letters patent safety should not come first, yet for historical reasons four very important buildings in London do not have to adhere to the rigorous licensing requirements for all other venues.

The Government were wise to introduce the new clause and to consider the point in depth. I said earlier that I should have been hard pushed to vote for that part of the Bill that allowed this exemption to continue if the Government had not recognised the need for substantial changes and if they had not taken the wise advice that they have sought since the proceedings in Standing Committee to rectify this anomaly.

The Westminster city council devoted a great deal of time and energy to considering the implications of the new clause. The council has been outstanding in its promotion of the safety interests of everyone who goes to sporting, musical and entertainment venues in the Westminster area. I am delighted that it has had the wisdom and the perception to support the initiative that I introduced in the Standing Committee, and that my hon. Friend the Minister has so generously and appreciatively considered.

My hon. Friend raised various points when he introduced the new clause. Coupled with the new clause is amendment No. 3. My hon. Friend seeks to include the words

"The Theatre Royal, Haymarket or the Royal Albert Hall"

in schedule 4 to the Bill. The Local Government Act 1963 will have to be amended. That led hon. Members to pay close attention to the need for a new clause to sort out the problems concerning the wording of the Local Government Act and the anomalies caused by the historical precedents at these four venues.

I hope that the exemptions will go further and that we shall not ignore the implications for theatregoers at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. If a theatre is exempted, for historical reasons, from the need to have a theatre licence or an entertainments licence, nobody suggests that the management of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden or the Theatre Royal Drury Lane do not impose the required safety standards. It would be quite wrong for anybody to interpret our remarks as being critical of the safety standards that are imposed by the management of those outstanding places of entertainment. Nevertheless, that anomaly must be sorted out in law to ensure that the standards that are required to obtain a theatre licence or an entertainments licence are adhered to both in the spirit —as they are at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden and at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane—and in the letter of the law. That was the reason for my original amendment.

My hon. Friend's answer covered some aspects of this point. It is difficult to tackle the problems associated with letters patent and then to legislate to cover the phrase "licence of the Crown". Despite those difficulties, suitable legislation must be drafted to ensure that both the spirit and the letter of the law are followed in all four venues that are exempted by the 1963 Act.

I was interested to hear of the historical reasons why one of these venues was exempt and why, according to the Minister, it appears no longer to be exempt. I am delighted that detailed historical research has led my hon. Friend to come before the House to remedy the problem regarding the Theatre Royal Haymarket. However, I am not convinced that that goes far enough.

I am completely satisfied that the new clause is acceptable, according to the terms and objectives of the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Bill. That is precisely what my hon. Friend was trying to achieve. If so, he has achieved it in a masterly fashion. However, I would have hoped that my hon. Friend, with his genius, intellectual tenacity and capacity for seeing through a mass of historical data, literary footnotes and references, and with his way of going straight to the heart of an argument, would have gone further and tackled the problems that he recognises as being exceptionally difficult, the problems of letters patent, historical status and, above all, the interpretation of "licence of the Crown." Only that held him back from going further in moving new clause 1. Nevertheless, that can be remedied, and I hope that it will be.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) intervened on the issue of sporting events in the two other important and significant cultural and artistic centres. I understand the hon. Gentleman's strength of feeling and I am pleased that there was all-party recognition in this House that we need to consider going one step further.

The whole essence and character of the handling of this clause and the way the House is addressing it shows how we can get together and tackle problems that might otherwise separate us in Committee for party political reasons. In this new clause we put the interests of the public and of public safety first, both in Committee and in this House, thus enabling it to pass so successfully and without problems or divisions that might otherwise harry our proceedings in the Palace of Westminster.

I thank my hon. Friend for responding to the removal of certain exemptions and the implications of the removal. The new clause goes a long way towards tackling the overall problem and completely deals with the immediate problem in the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Bill. For that reason I welcome it. I hope that other hon. Members will speak on this new clause. I can see the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) on the edge of his seat, willing to make a contribution for the Labour party so that we can have complete unanimity on this issue. I hope that he will lend his support. I would not want to push him because there are other important amendments that the House will be considering later this evening. I am even more delighted to see the hon. Member for Orkney and

Shetland seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to support me in supporting the Minister in moving the new clause.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I welcome this new clause.

Mr. Wallace: I wish to ensure that this new clause has all-party support and I add my welcome to it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have seldom heard supporting remarks from the Opposition Benches that have been so lucid or so much to the point. We are grateful for their support, but at the end of the day the credit for what has been achieved goes to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan). Had he not raised this matter in Committee, the amendment and the new clause would not be before the House now. My hon. Friend said some kind things about me and I propose to study *Hansard* because my opening remarks in my election address will be based very much on what he said.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) laughs, but I note that he was nodding agreement when my hon. Friend was making those kind remarks. I heard what my hon. Friend said, that we have not gone far enough. I regret that it has not been possible to remove the exemptions for entertainment lawfully held by virtue of letters patent or licence of the Crown. We have had about two weeks to look into this issue. The concept of "licence of the Crown" is not readily comprehensible. Letters patent involve issues of constitutional importance, notably the status of letters patent and the prerogative of the Crown.

It would not be right to legislate after an interval of two weeks without full consultation, and that is why we have not addressed those two exemptions in the course of this Bill, but should a suitable statutory vehicle emerge it will be our intention to look again at them.

5.45 pm

My hon. Friend said that in premises which are used for important purposes of entertainment it is essential that proper provision should be made for fire safety. He emphasised, as I do, that despite the exemptions, to which he drew our attention, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority is wholly satisfied as to the adequacy of the arrangements at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whatever I or my hon. Friend may have said in the course of this debate, will not go away with the impression that there is any anxiety about safety at those premises, because there is not. I hope that this new clause, together with the amendment, will attract the support of this House and will thus become law.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 1

POWER TO EXEMPT FROM REQUIREMENT TO HAVE FIRE CERTIFICATE

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, leave out lines 39 to 41 and insert—

'( ) The fire authority shall not grant exemption under this section for any premises without causing an inspection to be carried out under subsection (4) above unless they have caused the premises to be inspected (under that or any other power) within the preceding twelve months.'.

This is quite an important amendment which was introduced in response to what the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said in Committee. It is a credit to him that this issue was raised. To understand this amendment one must have an understanding of the statutory background to clause 1. The main statute with which we are concerned is the Fire Precautions Act 1971, which is aimed at protecting life from the risk of fire. The central feature of that Act is the requirement that occupiers of premises which are put to a use which is designated by order made by the Secretary of State should obtain a fire certificate from the local fire authority.

Before the local fire authority issues the relevant certificate, it is required to satisfy itself as to the adequacy of fire safety on the premises, including the means of escape, the means for fighting fire and the means for giving warning to people on the premises. When the measures are not found to be satisfactory, the fire authority has the statutory power to acquire appropriate improvements. In addition, the fire certificate can impose any requirements that the fire authority considers necessary, including maintenance conditions and the requirement for training staff and keeping records.

That is the statute on which the subsequent delegated legislation was founded and to which this Act refers. In 1972 the Secretary of State designated hotels and boarding houses providing sleeping accommodation for six or more persons or for any number of persons above the first floor or below the ground floor as being premises which required a fire certificate.

In 1976 the certification process was taken yet further in that under the fire certification requirements under the 1971 Act provision was made to extend the process to factories, offices, shops and railway premises which were previously subject to certification under the Factories Act 1961 and the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963. Under the designation order such premises in which more than 20 persons are employed to work, or more than 10 persons are employed to work other than on the ground floor, are required to be certificated.

Further changes were made in that factories in which explosives or highly flammable substances are stored or used also need a certificate, regardless of the number of employees. Thus, in general terms, fire certificates are needed for all but the smallest hotels and boarding houses and for many places of work.

Naturally, since the certification provision of the 1971 Act came into force fire authorities have carried out extensive programmes to certificate premises in the categories which I have described. The 1971 Act, together with the delegated legislation which followed, has led to a substantial improvement in fire safety.

However, as you will be the first to appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, such legislation requires constant scrutiny and updating. That is precisely what has been happening. A process of review was undertaken which culminated in proposals produced within the framework of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council which includes representatives of fire authorities and the fire service. A consultative document based on these proposals was published in 1985. As a result of the comments received, a further consultative document was issued last year. The consultative process led to the substantial provisions that are to be found in part I of the Bill.

In substance, it has been thought right under the clause to enable the Secretary of State to specify in an order made under section 1 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 descriptions of premises which a fire authority may exempt

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

from the requirement to have a fire certificate, even though they are being put to a designated use under section 1 of the 1971 Act and are not otherwise exempted. In other words, clause 1 says that the Secretary of State may by provision exempt certain classes of premises which are, on the face of it, designated premises, but he can do so only by giving to the local authority a discretion to make that exemption, the local authority being the fire authority for these purposes.

The point that exercised the minds of hon. Members in Committee was that it was right and proper that before an exemption order was made by the fire authority it should have carried out an inspection. That is precisely what the amendment is seeking to achieve. It provides:

"The fire authority shall not grant exemption under this section for any premises without causing an inspection to be carried out under subsection (4) above unless they have caused the premises to be inspected (under that or any other power) within the preceding twelve months."

It thus follows that an inspection within the relevant period is a condition precedent to the power of exemption arising.

The amendment has been introduced because of an undertaking that I gave in Committee to the hon. Member for Battersea. Because of that undertaking, he withdrew the amendment which he had moved in Committee. I hope that my amendment meets completely the undertaking that I gave and that it will satisfy the hon. Gentleman.

The amendment will allow fire authorities to avoid needless duplication of inspections so that they can exempt premises on the basis of knowledge gained on a recent inspection, but it sets a reasonable limit to that discretion and ensures that an inspection has taken place within the previous 12 months. Of course, even if the fire authority had inspected within the previous 12 months, it can, if it wishes, require a further inspection, if that is thought necessary, before issuing the certificate of exemption. We have given the fire authority a wide discretion but we have also fettered it in the way set out in the amendment.

I very much hope that this approach will commend itself to the hon. Member for Battersea and to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), who played such a prominent part in the discussion in Committee.

Mr. Dubs: I welcome the amendment. As the Minister said, it reflects precisely the amendment that I moved in Committee which the Minister said he would like to consider and get drafted to Home Office standards. I understand that the amendment will achieve what I intended: that if more than 12 months have gone by there will be an inspection by the fire authority. As the Bill was drafted originally, such an inspection was not necessary. This small improvement will add to the fire safety standards, and I welcome it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8

DUTIES AS REGARDS SAFETY PENDING DETERMINATION OF APPLICATIONS FOR FIRE CERTIFICATES

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 10, line 3, leave out 'and' and insert—

'(*aa*) the means for fighting fire with which the premises are provided are maintained in efficient working order; and'.

This is another important amendment. Its main purpose is again to meet an undertaking that I gave in Committee on an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). Because of that undertaking, the hon. Gentleman felt able to withdraw his amendment. I hope that he will support the amendment I am moving. It might be helpful if I were to give the House an indication of what the amendment is designed to achieve because I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office has a particular interest in it.

Clause 8 imposes a duty on the applicant for a fire certificate to secure that, pending the disposal of the application, the means of escape with which the premises are provided can be safely and effectively used, and that employees receive instruction or training on what to do in the case of fire. The amendment adds the further requirement that any means for fighting fire with which the premises are provided shall be maintained in good and efficient working order.

I should like to describe the amendment which the hon. Member for Battersea moved in Committee. It was intended to extend to means for fighting fire the interim duty which applied under clause 8 to premises subject to certification in order to cover the period between the date of the application and the date of certification, or, for that matter, the granting of exemption. What he had in mind was to include means for fighting fire amongst the measures that the occupier was required to secure.

There were problems about his amendment. First, there is no fire-fighting appliance that can properly be prescribed for all ills. We might find ourselves providing a statutory requirement which involved an occupier in obtaining fire-fighting appliances which were either wholly inappropriate or positively dangerous. The Committee found that a compelling argument and the hon. Member for Battersea was good enough not to proceed with his amendment.

However, a point which required consideration was whether we should impose on the occupier a statutory obligation to maintain the means for fighting fire which exist at the time of the making of the application. That seems to be a sensible thing to do and is consistent with the approach that we have more generally adopted in the Bill. That is reflected in the amendment now before the House and I very much hope that it will command hon. Members' approval.

6 pm

Mr. Dubs: I wish to welcome this amendment, too, which reflects very closely my intention in Standing Committee. There are already two conditions which have to be met when an application for a fire certificate has been made. One is that a means of escape in case of fire is provided, and the second is that persons employed to work on the premises are trained in what to do in case of fire. This amendment adds a third condition—that the means for fighting fire with which the premises are provided shall be maintained in efficient working order.

This may seem, on the face of it, to be a small amendment, but we know that there are premises which could suffer from fire and which present hazards should a fire break out. By having adequate means for fighting fires, both the premises and lives could be saved. Therefore, I believe that this amendment will be an important addition to fire safety.

We are referring, of course, to a variety of premises, as the Minister made clear. I have in mind, for example, small workshops in the clothing trade. Unfortunately, there have been some rather tragic fires in such premises, particularly in the east end of London. I believe that this amendment will lessen the risks of a dangerous fire occurring in premises of that kind and in other premises covered by this provision.

Mr. Walter Harrison (Wakefield): The words of the amendment are to me very important:

"the means for fighting fire with which the premises are provided are maintained in efficient working order; and".

I am concerned indeed when we use words of this nature. What do we mean when we say "the means for fighting fire"? How far should it extend? Does it mean that one must be able to indicate that there is a fire? Does it mean that one's alarm and communications systems must be correct? Does it mean that the warning system must be efficient? Does it mean that the provision for sustaining the responsibility for communication and dealing with a fire must be adequate?

"The means for fighting fire" implies that the communication services are totally alerted. It means that when someone presses the privatised British Telecom 999 button it will operate. Are we sure of that? Are we assured that when one presses the 999 button to call the police, the fire service or the hospital service there will be a response without a question being asked by British Telecom about who will pay for it and who will accept the responsibility for it?

I wish to be assured that when the 999 button is pressed the full communications system will come into play for fighting the fire. Ratepayers and taxpayers should be totally covered by the system. When one presses the 999 button, one should be fully protected.

The word "and" at the end of the amendment worries me. I want to know, and I hope that the Minister will spell it out to me, that when someone presses the 999 button British Telecom will not ask the ambulance service or the fire service if he can pay for the call. Will the 999 service be maintained and will the full fire service be called upon irrespective of who presses the button and asks for full fire service coverage?

I am very pleased that our fire communications service in the Palace of Westminster has recently been brought up to date. The fire service has been enlarged, it is able to cope and there is no 999 problem. I hope that when this clause is established with this amendment the 999 system will be totally applied and there will be no restriction whatsoever, so that it is possible to maintain the fire services in efficient working order.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As one would expect, the right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) has raised an important point which deserves a careful answer. I am sure that he appreciates that clause 8, in particular, is meant to deal with the interim position between the time when the certificate is applied for and the time when the fire authority either grants a safety certificate or decides to grant an exemption. Therefore, it is intended to cover a fairly narrow period. In effect, clause 8 provides that the systems which are within the premises for fire escape and for fighting fire shall be maintained in good and efficient working order.

The right hon. Member asked, very fairly, what was meant by the phrase "means for fighting fire." The phrase has a narrow meaning and is intended to extend only to fire-fighting appliances rather than to the more general considerations which he mentioned. But of course some of the wider points that he has brought to the attention of the House would feature in the safety certificate, which could be issued once the fire authority had determined the application.

I hope that the right hon. Member will bear in mind that this amendment is intended to cover a fairly narrow period, but I am very grateful to him for raising what is clearly an important point.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 4

REPEALS

Amendment made: No. 3, in page 41, line 15, column 3, after '12', insert

', in paragraph 1(6), the words "the Theatre Royal Haymarket or the Royal Albert Hall",'. — *[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Queen's Consent and Prince of Wales's Consent signified.]*

6.8 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I appreciate that it is the desire of the House to move to other business. Therefore, I will make my comments very brief.

I should like to thank the members of the Committee, notably my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moyniham) and, if I may, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), for the very constructive way in which the Committee proceedings were conducted. Their co-operation made it possible to improve the Bill, and I am grateful for that.

We have today extended and altered the Bill. We have restricted the discretion of the fire authority to exempt without an inspection for the purpose. We have extended the interim duty to include means for fighting fire and we have made various other important changes, such as the removal of the exemption of the Royal Albert Hall and the Theatre Royal. The Bill overall improves the safety afforded to the public both in respect of hazards posed by fire and hazards posed at sports grounds, mainly with regard to regulated stands. The Bill represents a valuable addition to public safety, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Dubs: Were this not local government election day, I am quite certain that many hon. Members would be here to take part in the debate. I refer in particular to my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who has a long-standing commitment to the cause of sport and who has expressed regret to me that he is not able to be here to take part in the final stages of the legislation.

I have expressed one regret about the Bill. The Minister will be aware of what I am referring to because I tried to move an amendment in Committee. For the first time there will be charges imposed in connection with fire safety. That is a retrograde step. I have made my position and that of my colleagues clear in Committee and I continue to say that it is a bad step. I appreciate that the charges will be relatively small, as the Minister pointed out.

[Mr. Dubs]

Nevertheless, we are establishing a precedent. My fear is that, having established such a precedent, future Governments may decide to increase the charges for fire safety. That is a bad decision because it may mean that, because some owners of premises cannot afford those charges or wish to avoid them, standards of fire safety will be that much less.

One other difficulty is in the part of the Bill concerning sport and safety at sports grounds. In Committee we discussed the difficulties facing small clubs. At the risk of breaching the harmony of today's occasion, I quote from a letter sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde from the secretary of the Vauxhall-Opel league, a worthy league but one that does not have the benefit of large attendances. In Committee the Minister said that clubs had been slow in coming forward with protests or evidence about the possible hardship for them of some of the provisions in the Bill. The Minister went on to suggest, in an uncharacteristic manner, that that showed acquiescence on their part. The letter said:

"I believe it merely shows ignorance of the proposals."

In other words, the smaller clubs were not fully aware of the provision. However, I am sure that the larger clubs were. There is concern that some of the financial burdens imposed upon small clubs may be unduly onerous. I moved an amendment in Committee that was accepted that will make it possible for a Minister to extend the provisions regarding the size of stands below the present level of 500. I am aware that that may add to the burden on small clubs, which point is referred to in the letter, but because of the way that amendment was couched, it will be future Ministers who decide how to bring that into being. It is perfectly clear that any Minister ought to have in mind the financial burdens on small clubs. In a sense that point has been taken in hand and I am sure that future Ministers of any party will be aware of what the Committee discussed and considered. Nevertheless, I think it is important to place on the record the concerns of small clubs because, although we wish to protect the safety of spectators at sports grounds, we do not wish to do anything that may drive those clubs into more serious financial difficulties. I will not go through the other details in the letter except to say that some of those clubs have small attendances and may well find themselves unable to meet some of the obligations in the legislation.

With the two reservations I have expressed, this is an extremely welcome measure. It has been warmly supported on all sides. I know that the Fire Brigades Union welcomes it, that the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers believes that it will protect its members better than before and that all fire services believe that the Bill contains important provisions, which they welcome.

Throughout our approach we have been anxious that the Bill should get on to the statute book as soon as possible. We are all aware that there is a remote possibility that there will be a general election before too long. As we have done our best to get the Bill through the House as quickly as possible I hope that, if a general election should by some chance be announced before too long, the Bill will get on to the statute book before Parliament is dissolved. The Minister is nodding his head, I presume in agreement. The Bill represents an advance in fire safety and, therefore, is to be welcomed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Financial Services

Mr. Speaker: Is it the wish of the House that the three orders be taken together?

6.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I believe that it is.

I beg to move,

That the draft Financial Services Act 1986 (Delegation) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 22nd April 1987, be approved.

As the House has agreed, we are also discussing motions 4 and 5.

That the draft Financial Services (Transfer of Functions Relating to Friendly Societies) Order (Northern Ireland) 1987, which was laid before this House on 22nd April, be approved.

That the draft Financial Services (Transfer of Functions Relating to Friendly Societies) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 22nd April, be approved.

It is almost exactly two years since the House debated the financial services White Paper. The Financial Services Bill, which was based on that White Paper, was subsequently introduced in the House in December 1985 and received long and careful consideration before receiving Royal Assent in November last year. In parallel with this parliamentary consideration, the Securities and Investments Board and the prospective self-regulation organisations were working to develop the rules and institutions which will regulate investment business under the Act. The orders we are now debating represent the single most significant parliamentary step in setting up the new regulatory system envisaged in the Act.

The Financial Services Act embodies our belief that, to achieve effective regulation of the financial services sector, it is necessary to combine two elements. The first element is strong statutory backing for the regulatory system. The Act will make it a criminal offence to carry on investment business without authorisation. It will provide for rules to be made governing the way in which authorised businesses carry on investment business and it will provide legal sanctions, including civil suits, injunctions, restitution orders and withdrawal of authorisation, if the rules are broken.

The second element is practitioner-based administration of those statutory powers. The Government believe that, if they are given the right powers, practitioner-based bodies have the best prospects of effectively regulating investment businesses and protecting the interests of investors. Accordingly, the Act has, from its introduction, provided for the majority of powers it confers on the Secretary of State to be transferred to a designated agency whose governing body would include both practitioners in the financial services sector and non-practitioners who have the knowledge and expertise to ensure that investors' interests are properly looked after.

The Act lays down a number of criteria which must, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, be satisfied before powers can be transferred to a designated agency. The agency must be able and willing to exercise the powers that are to be transferred. It must have a balanced governing body whose members are appointed by the Secretary of State and the Governor of the Bank of England. In this respect I should mention that, while the SIB has always had a strong independent element on its board, we have been mindful of the comments expressed during the passage of the Bill, and the recently announced appointments will further reinforce that non-practitioner element. The agency must have satisfactory monitoring, enforcement and decision-making arrangements. It must have effective arrangements for the investigation of complaints, which must provide, in appropriate cases, for investigations to be carried out independently. It must be able and willing to provide high standards in the conduct of investment business and to co-operate with other financial regulators. The Act also provides that, provided it meets those criteria, the body to which the initial transfer of functions shall be made must be the Securities and Investments Board Limited—the SIB.

I should add that the Act also provides for the transfer to a transferee body of certain powers relating to friendly societies. The conditions that have to be satisfied before these powers can be transferred are broadly the same as those to which I have just referred.

The purpose of these draft orders is, therefore, to transfer to the SIB the bulk of the transferable powers under the Act. The package represents a considerable range of powers which will establish the SIB as the keystone in the new regulatory framework. It is intended that the SIB should have the ultimate responsibility for establishing the standards which firms will have to meet in order to be regarded as fit and proper to carry on investment business. This will result both from the SIB's power to grant direct authorisation to businesses and from its function of recognising self-regulating organisations and professional bodies, membership of which will confer authorisation.

The SIB will also draw up the rules and regulations which will set the standards for behaviour by investment businesses. In some cases this will be because the SIB's own rules are directly applicable. In other cases, the rules of recognised self-regulating organisations and professional bodies will apply: but those rules will have to afford protection to investors at least equivalent to that afforded by the SIB's rule book. Finally, the SIB will be responsible for enforcement, having at its disposal a wide range of investigation powers and sanctions, including the power to initiate prosecutions for some offences.

The principal order is the Financial Services (Delegation) Order, which concerns functions other than those relating exclusively to friendly societies. The other two orders transfer functions relating to friendly societies in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland.

There are a certain number of transferable powers not covered by the orders. The most significant are the powers in chapter VIII of the Act relating to collective investment schemes. These represent a largely self-contained area which can be dealt with independently of the recognition of SROs and RPBs and the authorisation of businesses which must begin as soon as possible if the basic framework of the Act is to be introduced at an early date. Other powers which are retained concern various international matters; the powers to make indemnity rules, where the SIB has decided not to make proposals, opting instead for a widely drawn compensation scheme; certain powers relating to persons who are not authorised persons; and the function of revoking recognition of an SRO on certain grounds related to insurance since my Department remains primarily responsible for the regulation of insurance companies.

Before laying the draft delegation orders my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the two registrars for

[Mr. Michael Howard]

friendly societies are required by the Act to satisfy themselves that the SIB meets the criteria to which I have already referred. They must also be satisfied that the rules and regulations which it proposes to make afford an adequate level of protection for investors and, where appropriate, comply with the principles set out in schedule 8 to the Act.

Schedule 8 provides that the rules must promote high standards of integrity and fair dealing in the conduct of investment business. They must require an authorised person to exercise due diligence in providing investment services. They must require an authorised person to subordinate his own interests to those of his clients and to act fairly between his clients. They must require an authorised person to have regard to his clients' circumstances and to disclose his interest in any transaction, including commissions and other inducements. They must require an authorised person to disclose the capacity in which he acts and to give sufficient information for a potential investor to make an informed decision. They must provide for adequate warnings to be given to investors when the price of an investment is stabilised and they must provide for the protection of property held by an authorised person.

The rules on compensation must make the best provision that can reasonably be made. The rules must require the keeping of proper records and make provision for their inspection when appropriate. Finally, the rules must take account of the fact that different classes of investors warrant different levels of protection.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is also required to satisfy himself as to the acceptability of the rules in competition terms. On 10 February we received the SIB's formal request for transfer of powers, together with its proposed rules and regulations entitled "Regulation of Investment Business" and a document entitled "SIB's Approach to its Regulator Responsibilities", copies of both of which have been made available in the Table Office. We subsequently received reports on these documents from the Director General of Fair Trading and further amendments proposed by the SIB, on which the director general has also reported. Copies of all these documents have been placed in the Library. We have also received a large number of comments both from representative bodies and individual practitioners.

Having considered all the material submitted, it has been decided that the SIB and the rules it proposes to make fulfil the conditions and requirements laid down in the Act for a transfer of the powers referred to in the draft orders. The House will recognise that the SIB's rule book covers a large range of topics. I propose to refer specifically to the two issues which provoked considerably more comments than any other, both in the Director General's report and in the comments made by interested parties. These were the costs to small independent insurance intermediaries of complying with the new requirements and the issue which has come to be known as polarisation.

It would be pointless to pretend—and we have never done so—that improvements in investor protection can be achieved without cost and without placing some new requirements on firms. To mention just two of the characteristics of the new system, regular monitoring arrangements and an adequate compensation scheme are bound to cost money. Having said that, I should say also that I think some of the estimates of compliance costs which I have heard have been considerable overestimates. Some of the estimates, for example, have assumed elaborate new compliance procedures whereas in fact many of the SIB requirements reflect current best practice and will require little if any change in practice in reputable businesses. Furthermore, the SIB has made considerable efforts to keep costs at an acceptable level. Indeed, in March amendments to the rule book were proposed which were designed to reduce the costs of compliance for small investment businesses which do not handle clients' money. Having considered all the evidence, my right hon. Friend is satisfied, as required by the terms of the Financial Services Act 1986, that the SIB's proposals will not significantly restrict, distort or prevent competition on this account.

The polarisation debate has in some ways been the other side of the coin, in the sense that very many of those most worried about the costs which they believed the SIB's rules implied were equally strong in their support of the polarisation rules. These rules have evoked very strong support on both sides of the House. Indeed, more than 60 members supported early-day motion 814 backing polarisation. Most hon. Members will be aware that polarisation is the requirement that all those who sell life assurance and unit trusts should act either as fully independent intermediaries or as company representatives selling only the product of a single company or group. The SIB has argued, and we accept, that this is an important safeguard for investors. Some have argued that it will have an anti-competitive effect. We take the contrary view. Polarisation will clarify the status of investment advisers and will therefore promote transparency in the market. It will therefore enhance rather than restrict competition.

The Director General of Fair Trading did not find the polarisation rules on their own anti-competitive. Indeed, he, like us, considered them in isolation to be conducive to competition. But he was concerned about the implications of polarisation when combined with the costs of compliance for small intermediaries. This concern arose from the director general's assessment that the number of of independent intermediaries would be significantly reduced; that the rules would lead to a reduction in independent advice from banks and building societies; and that the overall result was therefore likely to be an increase in the influence of company representatives.

We have considered the director general's arguments carefully but we canot accept his conclusions. First, as I have said, I do not believe that the costs of compliance will be as high as some have suggested. Moreover, polarisation will ensure that the independence of genuinely independent advisers is perceived as a real advantage. So I believe that there will continue to be a substantial body of independent intermediaries. Indeed, I expect the rules to be of positive benefit to the genuinely independent intermediary, with the result that the availability of independent advice will be safeguarded. This reinforces the view that polarisation is in itself conducive to competition. Secondly, I believe that the banks and building societies will be able to adjust to the new regime without radical change, and that the availability of independent advice from banks and building societies will not be significantly reduced since these will be able to continue to operate, if they wish, broadly as they do now. For those reasons we have come to the conclusion that the rules will not have a significantly anti-competitive effect.

In seeking approval for the draft orders, we are recommending transfer powers to the SIB on the basis of the rules it has submitted.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): My hon. and learned Friend said that in his view there would be a substantial number of independent intermediaries. I think that those were his words. As Sir Gordon Borrie raised the important point as to what the number would be and was not too sure about that, will my hon. and learned Friend say what he means and what number he has in mind?

Mr. Howard: I cannot give any really sensible numerical estimate, but I would not expect any substantial decrease in the number of independent intermediaries or in the availability of independent advice on these matters.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), am I not right in thinking that Sir Gordon Borrie's expression of concern was delivered before the initiative taken by the SIB materially to reduce the costs to small intermediaries, provided that they did not handle clients' money? Is it not now much less likely, therefore, that Sir Gordon Borrie's fears will materialise?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to the extent that the original reservations that the director general expressed came before the modification of the SIB's rules on costs. The director general was required to comment on the modification, and I fear that it was not sufficient to alter his original view, so it would be rash to claim that that view was wholly invalidated—at least for him—by the modification.

In seeking approval for these draft orders, we are therefore recommending transfer of powers to the SIB on the basis of the rules that it has submitted, as modified by amendments that it proposed during our consideration. This is an appropriate point to pay tribute to the work that the SIB and its staff have put into the draft rules and the setting up of the framework described in its document. No one should underestimate the difficulties of producing a new body of regulation essentially from scratch. The SIB has worked hard to enable this next step in improving investor protection to be taken, and I am sure that, once the powers are transferred, it will apply itself with equal vigour to the tasks that Parliament has given it. I ask the House to approve the draft orders.

6.31 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Having expected this debate for a couple of months, as a major set piece debate on the City and its regulations, I find it odd that such a central proposal is being smuggled through when the rest of the country, and much of the rest of the House, have their minds elsewhere. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are Labour Members?"] My people have decided on a sensible division of labour, whereby I shall put our case at the Dispatch Box tonight and they will pave the way for the election outside. We shall meet tomorrow and find out which of us has been more successful. Therefore, I am happy to say that Labour Members do not intend to divide the House on this order, and I shall not be requesting an adjournment to consult my supporters on their attitude to the order.

Having made that statement, for obvious reasons, it does not mean that our doubts about the SIB have been removed by the rule book, the events of the past two months or the Minister's speech. We remain opposed to the measure, not because we do not believe that the City requires supervision—it patently does—or because we do not believe that the SIB could be made into an appropriate vehicle for that supervision, but because we would be opposed to designating the SIB in its present form. First, the SIB is not a public body, and remains in a curious constitutional position, being a private company limited by guarantee. Secondly, it is not a publicly funded body. I have been entertained by some of the letters that I have received in recent weeks from modest financial intermediaries complaining about the cost of the structure. I hope that they will take the advantage of voting Labour at the forthcoming general election, thus relieving themselves of that burden.

Thirdly, we oppose the designation of the SIB in its present form because, as the Minister is well aware from our previous criticisms, it contains a clear majority of practitioners in the City. That means that there is a danger of the SIB confusing its two roles—as the body that supervises the City, and as the body that speaks for the City. It could thus become a sort of Law Society of the financial institutions. The Minister came near to recognising that point when he emphasised that the costs of meeting the SIB's rules has been exaggerated by some of the companies that have complained. He pointed out that the SIB had gone to great trouble to minimise the cost of meeting its rules. That is perfectly true, but the other side of the coin is that some of the rules have been criticised because, rather than changing existing practice, they seek to codify it. That applies in particular to the requirements for disclosure, which are no more onerous than the requirements met at present by most companies.

Of the 18 members of the SIB, only one could be described as representing the interest of the wider consuming public — the many private investors — attracted into the market by the present Government. There are, to be sure, half a dozen other representatives of consumers of financial services, but they are representatives of the major institutions, which are well placed to make their voices heard by those who operate on their behalf.

Finally, we are opposed to the designation of the SIB in its present form because it does not include coverage of Lloyd's insurance market or of the work of the Takeover Panel. Those two omissions are curious as it is in those areas that the worst financial scandals have occurred over the past three years. The omission of the Takeover Panel is particularly odd. Over the past year, it has become clear that if there has been a weakness of self-regulation it has rested with the Takeover Panel and that, if there is a case for providing greater powers of investigation and subsequently of sanctions, it rests in the area that the panel supervises. For those reasons, we believe that the SIB is inadequate to the task.

To be fair to the Government, I think that, if they had their time again and were introducing a Financial Services Bill now in the light of the events of the past 12 months, they would not be proposing the measure that the House passed 18 months ago and that they are obliged to defend tonight. Nevertheless, the Minister is obliged to lay the order designating the SIB, and I am obliged to note the order in its present form.

I have three comments on the rule book as laid by the SIB. First, I have enormous sympathy with the point made

[Mr. Robin Cook]

by Sir Gordon Borrie about the impenetrability of the rules. It is regrettable that we are confronted with a set of semi-statutes of such length, language and complexity. I take the point made eloquently — and by comparison with the rule book with great lucidity — by the stock exchange in its circular to members. The SROs are placed in greater difficulty when they are at a tertiary level of the process — following the Financial Services Act and the SIB rule book — and are then obliged to devise their own rules to meet the registration requirements of the SIB on the basis of SIB draft rules which are impenetrable, complex and lengthy.

Secondly, it is regrettable that there is not a greater thrust in the SIB rules to tackle some of the cartels that still exist. I draw the Minister's attention to recent comment in the financial press concerning the commissions charged by the unit trusts. It is noticeable that since big bang there has been a sharp reduction in the cost of trading by the unit trusts. Their fees have gone down by about 50 per cent. and stamp duty has been halved, yet the spread being charged by the unit trusts has remained constant and, in one or two celebrated cases, has actually expanded.

A body that supervises the City — not only by preventing fraud but by ensuring that the City provides a fair return for and decent access to the small investor — should turn its mind to that development which is enabling the unit trust to take advantage and to pocket the gains of big bang rather than turning them over to the many small investors who put their money into unit trusts.

Thirdly, I must confess that I have mixed views on polarisation, partly, no doubt, because of the impenetrability of the problem. On the whole, I incline to the view taken by the Under-Secretary of State and by the SIB. But, regardless of which view one takes on the merits of polarisation, it was vital that the SIB won that debate and obtained the backing of the Minister and the House. If, at this early stage of the SIB's existence, it had lost this, its first battle with the major forces in the City, thereafter its standing, prestige and status would have suffered a major blow from which it might never have recovered. Therefore, whether or not the SIB were right in the first instance — I believe that, on balance, it was — it is vital that the House backs it in this matter and makes it clear that the SIB has our confidence.

The designation of the SIB in the order will be judged by history in the light of results. That, effectively, brings us to the resources available to the SIB compared with those available to other regulatory bodies, most notably the Securities and Exchange Commission. Those resources appear dangerously thin on the ground. The SEC has an annual budget of $40 million for surveillance alone. There are no comparable resources available to the SIB, which is faced with a major task.

The extent to which there is a churning of shares in the market at present is alarming. I looked at the figures only the other week when I received the stock exchange's latest fact sheet. Trading in December last year was on a turnover of £57 billion, which was double the figure for December 1985. Total turnover for March was £165 billion — three times the turnover figure in December and six times the figure for December 1985. That level of churning in turnover, especially in the gilts market, cannot be healthy. Inevitably, it will pose major questions of supervision, of regulation and of the prevention of fraud.

Other evidence has been made available to us by the latest issue of *Acquisitions Monthly*, which has updated its survey of share price movements in the context of takeover bids and which points out that the increase in the price of the share of the target company in the period preceding the announcement of a bid continues to rise inexplicably and disturbingly. *Acquisitions Monthly* found that, of the 100 such bids that it monitored in the last six months of 1986, on average, the share price of the target company rose by 11 per cent. before the bid went public, in a quarter of the cases it rose by more than 20 per cent. and in one tenth of the cases it rose by more than 30 per cent. No doubt, in most of those cases there is an innocent explanation. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in some there is a less innocent explanation which reflects people taking an opportunity in the market on information which they had obtained in a professional or perhaps rather unprofessional manner. That poses a major task for the SIB. I wish it well. I hope that it proves adequate to the task.

I am confident on one point — current events in the City will force themselves upon the consciousness of the House in the near future and we shall have another opportunity to debate this matter, perhaps when the attention of the House is focused in the Chamber rather than on the ballot box outside. On that occasion, I promise the Minister a more testing time in the debate.

6.43 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I have not taken part in these debates before but, because I have been in touch with people in the City who have registered some concern to me, I want to ask my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State some questions about the orders. I should like to declare an interest in that I am a non-executive director of a small financial institution, although it is largely unaffected by the orders.

No one would disagree with the principle of regulation, which has been warmly welcomed. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State has had an extremely difficult job, which he has discharged with great vigour and skill. He will be aware that there are those — as there always are — in such cases who do not necessarily agree with his conclusions, but that is inevitable. These arguments are at the margin because the Government have decided the road down which they wish to go. Despite the fact that I think that it is a pity that some of these matters have not been more fully debated, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, we are now at a stage when the order for the delegation of authority has been laid before the House and we can comment only in the most general terms.

Will my hon. and learned Friend the Minister agree not to stick or to urge the SIB to stick too firmly to any particular timetable? Some quarters feel that it will take time from delegation to get the systems up and running effectively and efficiently. These are important and weighty matters, and the most detailed and careful consideration will need to be given before any conclusions are reached. I understand that the clearing banks have received legal advice that the decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on polarisation is in breach of the treaty of Rome.

It is vital that, when the new framework is operative, it should be as good and as effective as possible. There is a danger that, by trying to stick to some kind of arbitrary timetable, or by laying down a timetable in a way that

would be difficult or politically embarrassing to turn from, the system could come into effect when the proposed rules and requirements of financial organisations have not been thought through properly and current doubts and disagreements resolved. There are, therefore, strong grounds, although, of course, I welcome the new era of regulation in principle and in fact, for urging my hon. and learned Friend the Minister not to seek to have the machine up and running by a certain date if, by then, the vehicle is not ready or has been constructed in such a way that it will either seize up or cause potential users to go elsewhere for their financial advice and activities.

At the moment, as the House knows, there are significant disagreements and discussions, some or all involving the Department of Trade and Industry, the Bank of England, the SIB, SROs and potential members of SROs—on such matters as segregation of capital, the scope and rules of SROs and proposals for complaints and compensation, to mention but a few. The SIB has not yet produced all its draft rules—for example, those relating only to collective investment schemes have not yet appeared. There are important and weighty decisions which have not yet been taken which will need time to be examined carefully and thoughtfully and which I hope my hon. and learned Friend the Minister agrees are worthy of being given further time and consideration.

It has been suggested that for the operation of the system to be fully in place by 1 January 1988 firms seeking authorisation will have to have applied for membership to the relevant SRO by 1 November 1987. It seems highly unlikely that the matters to which reference has been made will have been resolved in time for the necessary decisions and preparations to be taken by the end of October. There is no particular magic, it has been suggested to me, in either date. Even if there were, it is surely right to suggest that the great importance of regulating the scheme correctly and workably is greater than the desirability of announcing that a series of decisions and acts will have been carried out by a certain fixed date, especially when so many of these decisions depend on unresolved issues.

The House will very much appreciate the great care taken by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister on this legislation. I ask him to agree that it is vital that we do not rush the last fence. I hope that he will further consider the matters that I have mentioned.

6.48 pm

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): If any hon. Member present at the beginning of the debate had thought that the absence of Opposition Members showed that they were largely in agreement with the orders, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) disabused him of it. As the hon. Gentleman said, his troops will reappear, perhaps on another occasion — no doubt, on the Opposition Benches.

We have got this legislation right. The premise that the hon. Member for Livingston put forward that we should have a full statutory, bureaucratic system such as the American one is a mistake. The Government are right to put the emphasis on the regulatory authority being practitioner based so that it is more likely to be able to regulate the City in an effective way. It is a false premise to try to suggest that there is an argument as between a practitioner-based regulation and a full statutory system. With this legislation, we have managed to get the best of all worlds. We have full statutory backing and the country outside, the City and people who deal in financial services outside the City will have seen that the Government are taking regulation and industrial protection very seriously. If there is any wrong-doing it will be brought to book very quickly.

Enforcement is the key. If there were hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, I am sure that they would agree that this legislation must be toughly enforced. The three-tier approach that we have with the SROs, the SIB and the Government standing behind them is a system that will bring wrong-doers to book very quickly.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend agree, that, in addition to the structure that he has described, the heart of the matter is whether there will be independent watchdogs on these organisations that will ensure that the system works effectively? It is not sufficient to have the structure; we must also have within it people who will be independent and who will exercise those powers with courage and integrity.

Mr. Grylls: I agree with my hon. Friend, and we must see how that develops.

If people say, "What is the evidence that it is being treated seriously?", one can point out that some of the rules of giving evidence and such matters have been changed and that they are tougher in this legislation than in any other part of the criminal law. We have got that right and people should understand that. One example of that is compelling people to appear before the SIB or SROs as well as their auditors and bankers. That shows that the Government are taking this matter seriously. My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) was right on that point.

I want to move on to some of the aspects that affect some of the small practitioners. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister knows that many hon. Members were deeply concerned about the impact of the bureaucratic compliance and how its cost was to impinge on some of the small practitioners in the financial, insurance and other sectors. The chairman of the SIB has responded reasonably to that concern and has done something that many of us in respect of other parts of policy have been pressing on the Government. He has instigated a two-tier regulatory system. What is reasonable for a giant firm such as Prudential Assurance or Pearl Assurance to comply with is not reasonable for a two, three or 10-man firm. I am glad that Sir Kenneth Berrill has agreed to that and that there will be two-tier regulations, especially for those firms that are not handling clients' money.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend knows a great deal about these matters, but does he agree that, because of the fundamental nature and importance of the next stage of this legislation, it is vital that it is not rushed, since if it is not right there could be a lack of confidence in the market and regulations which may lead to business going elsewhere, which would be a very unhappy state of affairs?

Mr. Grylls: I agree with that. If we had made this regulatory system too burdensome it would be a very strange thing if the Government, who have done so much over the last eight years to encourage the growth of small firms, were to find that they had passed legislation that was forcing small firms to join together and become larger firms.

[Mr. Grylls]

I welcome the flexibility that Sir Kenneth Berrill has shown and the reduction in the charges. For example, a three-man firm that previously had to pay an application fee of £1,150 would now be required to pay £900. The periodic fee for the same size of firm would fall by 33 per cent. from £2,250 to £1,500. There would be a similar reduction for a 10-man firm. That shows that Sir Kenneth Berrill has applied his mind to this matter and that what I feared at one time would happen—that it would force firms to join together—will not happen, because these charges are not unreasonable.

The overriding responsibilities of Sir Kenneth Berrill and the members of the SIB are to protect the investor. It is a tricky task to carry out the onerous duty that the Act has laid on the SIB and to balance it without putting too much of a cost or bureaucratic burden on the smaller firms, which at the end of the day costs money.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my hon. Friend agree that by removing the insistence for carrying professional indemnity the SIB has further reduced costs that would have been quite a burden on the small firm and are a burden on all firms? Therefore, the firms that feel that they should take professional indemnity will be able to apply for it, but it will not be an obligation for trading in this market.

Mr. Grylls: I agree with my hon. Friend.

I am glad that the need for two-tier regulation and two-tier cost structures has been recognised by Sir Kenneth Berrill. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will continue to keep this aspect of regulatory framework in mind, and that he will agree that we are not in the business of forcing firms to join together; we are in the business of effective and tough investor regulation. As I believe that Sir Kenneth Berrill has shown by his changes that were announced some weeks ago, it is possible to combine the best of both worlds—a degree of flexibility and two-tier regulation—with the need to have that essential and effective industrial protection.

6.57 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): This is a somewhat invidious point at which to launch on to a debate as I suspect that the affairs of the City of London may shortly be punctuated by the affairs of the City of Westminster.

Perhaps I can start what I trust will be a brief, although punctuated, intervention by saying how much I welcome the orders that have been made by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. I look forward to the SIB taking up its new responsibilities for regulation of the investment markets.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister, who has played such a conspicuous and able part in the passage of the Bill through the House, will admit that during the lengthy Committee stage a contribution of some note was made about enhancing the status and powers of the SIB, a move which, in retrospect, has been increasingly welcomed in the City and by commentators. It was vindicated by subsequent events. By the sensitive way in which he has consulted about the rules and evolved not only the personnel but the activities of the board, Sir Kenneth Berrill has displayed a competence and an ability that have already gained the respect of investment markets and, indeed, investors not only in this country but beyond.

The order is important. For the first time, it transfers significant powers from the hands of the Secretary of State to an independent, powerful body that is recognised and identified by law and that, for the first time, will have a significant ability to take to task the fraudsters—

It being Seven o'clock, and there being private business set down by THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS *under Standing Order No. 16 (Time for taking private business), further proceeding stood postponed.*

City of Westminster Bill (By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The city that I have the honour to represent is not only the centre of London but the heart of Britain's capital and the seat of national government. It is, or should be, the nation's showpiece to British citizens and the world. Ninety-nine per cent. of all tourists to Britain visit Westminster. It now sees 10 million foreign tourists yearly, plus a further 13 million from within the United Kingdom. But the city—it is not unique in this respect—has the problem of litter, up to 90 tonnes daily during the tourist season. That is enough to fill the Chamber every month.

Few people could say that they were not at fault at some time in dropping litter. Some people are anti-social and take pleasure in defiling other people's environment. But the central fact facing the city is that occasional human lapses, multiplied by the number of people living in and passing through the city — 180,000 residents, 750,000 commuters, and many visitors — mean that Westminster's fate is to experience a growing volume of litter dropped by the tides of humanity to which the city is witness every day of the week, both in the day and during the night. The volume grows year by year because of the increasing amount of packaging and the expansion of fast food shops.

Westminster city council is not complacent. Indeed, it has been foremost among British councils in endeavouring to tackle the problem. It initiated the cleaner city pilot scheme in 1979. It was specifically adopted throughout the council's 220 miles of roads and 390 miles of footways. The council has installed 6,000 litter bins, together with 500 sponsored litter bins. Educational leaflets are provided for schools. There is close co-operation and frequent liaison between Westminster's cleansing services department and local community groups, residents' associations and businesses. Agreements are being reached with fast food outlets for their staff to conduct litter patrols of nearby areas. Westminster has launched a quality of life campaign to increase public awareness of the value of a cleaner city and to obtain further improvements in conditions on the streets. But the city council faces a high cost in achieving that aim. Despite major improvements in the efficiency of the council's cleansing services department in recent years, major street cleansing in central London costs up to £600,000—the yearly cost for Oxford street alone. The average figure for Westminster streets was £26,700 per mile in 1986-87. The net cost of the street cleansing service in Westminster, excluding refuse collection, will be £6,450,000 in 1987-88. Most of that is the cost of sweeping up litter.

Against that background, the city council has considered it to be quite realistic to budget for major increases in cleansing department manpower. Even then, it would not be possible to guarantee wholly clean streets, for such a policy fails to tackle the causes of litter. They have to do with human forgetfulness, human lapses and, sometimes, a failure to care for others' environment. The council has also given careful consideration to use of the existing litter laws, notably the Litter Act 1983. The chief failing of the Act is its requirement for criminal proceedings to be undertaken, with all that that implies in administrative procedures and the undue involvement of police, Crown prosecution and court time for an offence that is essentially anti-social rather than criminal.

The need for improved legislation pre-dates the Litter Act 1983 that basically consolidated pre-existing Acts of Parliament. For example, the March 1981 official report of Westminster city council's cleaner city pilot scheme stated that current legislation was

"particularly unsatisfactory. In theory, individuals can be prosecuted for dropping litter."

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What the hon. Gentleman said is correct; the legislation is unsatisfactory. But Westminster is a wealthy and powerful local authority. Would it not have been a salutary lesson to all potential litter louts to have seen Westminster pursuing through the courts a number of well-publicised cases? That would undoubtedly have been a major deterrent.

Mr. Wheeler: Westminster is indeed the heart of London and gives the appearance of being wealthy, but among its 180,000 residents are many people who draw housing benefit. Business, too, expects to pay a fair rate, not an excessive rate. Wealth is subject to qualification. As to prosecution, I shall refer in a moment or two to the developing role of the city and its plans for its enforcement service. If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will allow me to proceed, I may reach that interesting point.

The council report went on to state:

"In practice, prosecutions are very difficult to bring about and the low level of fines often imposed makes it unviable to do so."

The city council has proposed the Bill that is intended, as the preamble states,

"To make further provision for the enforcement of the Litter Act 1983 in the City of Westminster."

The core of the Bill is the proposal for a fixed penalty ticket to be issued when an authorised officer of the city council has reason to believe that a person is dropping litter or has just committed that offence. The Bill does not create a new offence of littering; it already exists in the Litter Act 1983. It merely adds to the Act by making it possible for a fixed penalty ticket to be issued for offences within the city of Westminster. Fixed penalty tickets have been established for more than 20 years as a recognised and practical method of improving enforcement of laws relating to a variety of offences, particularly minor motoring transgressions that are regarded by the public as less serious than major criminal acts. Their uses, along with their public acceptability, have grown.

The Bill does not adopt an on-the-spot fine system. That was considered and rejected by the council following early discussions with the Metropolitan police. Instead, any person handed a fixed penalty ticket will have the opportunity to pay a fine within 14 days, in which case no criminal proceedings will be taken against him. If the fine is not paid, the normal provisions of the Litter Act for criminal proceedings will be enforced.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I am sure that my hon. Friend will come to this point later, but how will one be able to identify the individual to whom a fixed penalty ticket is given, as we do not carry identity cards, which are common in many European states?

Mr. Wheeler: My hon. Friend touches on an interesting point. He is quite right to say that, in the United Kingdom,

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we do not as yet have identity cards; and in the enforcement of minor law, the constable or other enforcement agent has the delicate and somewhat difficult task of identifying the individual. We seem to overcome that difficulty by a mixture of bluff, common sense and good humour.

I said that a fixed penalty ticket could be issued, but the city council does not envisage tickets being issued on every occasion. That might lead to more littering of the streets. The council's policy is that its officers will ask the litterer to retrieve his presumed litter before any thought is given to issuing a fixed penalty ticket. The council sees no reason why responsible people will not do that, provided that they are asked courteously. The council is to give extensive training to its officers. No doubt it will take into account the thoughts of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on how to go about that.

There will be about 60 officers, comprising some members of the cleansing department staff, plus 41 members of the multi-purpose inspectorate, many of whom are already in post and employed by the city council for the enforcement of various laws, including street trading and planning regulations.

Mr. Tony Banks: I apologise for intervening again, but the hon. Gentleman will understand that as he is the hon. Member responsible for steering the measure through the House he must be prepared to answer whatever questions we ask him. Does what he has said mean that there has been an increase in the number of staff employed to carry out these duties? Secondly, what consultation has there been with the recognised trade unions? Did they agree to the proposals?

Mr. Wheeler: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's questions precisely because, as he knows, I am not a member of the city council and thus not privy to its every activity. However, I can tell him that the city council prides itself on close discussions with its employees, provides them with news letters, is in constant contact with its staff and will have discussed its objectives with its employees at all levels, as that is its normal practice.

As to the number of staff, I have said that the existing cleansing department staff will be employed, in addition to the 41 members of a new multi-purpose inspectorate. I have no doubt that, with the passage of time, others will be employed as appropriate to enforce the legislation—if the House approves it—and many other matters that concern the city council.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The hon. Gentleman has referred to 60 staff, who will enforce the provisions. Will he explain how any member of the public will know that he is dealing with a city council official who is trying to enforce the provisions and not someone else? How will they be recognised?

Mr. Wheeler: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's point in a moment.

The council will be guided by experience on the best way in which to deploy its staff. The multi-purpose inspectorate will undertake litter enforcement duties as part of its various roving tasks, and wardens from the cleansing department may be employed in specific locations, such as Oxford street and Trafalgar square. That is the point about which the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) was concerned. All of those employees will have clear means of identification.

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Gentleman refers to "clear means of identification". It is important to know the nature of an individual who tries to enforce the law. What is the hon. Gentleman talking about?

Mr. Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that anyone seeking to enforce the law must be able to show the citizen in the street that he is authorised to do so and that he is a proper and accountable person. As I have already said, the employees of the council will receive appropriate training for their duties. They will also be equipped with a proper means of identification. What will that be? It might, as my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes suggested, be a form of identity card—it almost certainly will be. The employees might even wear an appropriate form of clothing that identifies them as being from the Westminster city council, bearing in mind that that clothing should not allow them to be mistaken for members of the police force. I am sure that the city council will be pursuing those matters.

The city council has had detailed discussions with the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and the Metropolitan police about the provisions of the Bill, at council officer level and Civil Service level. It has also held discussions at political levels, including some with the Home Secretary, the Metropolitan police Commissioner, the Commissioner-designate and the leader of Westminster city council. With their agreement, the council proposes to make three substantive amendments to the Bill at Committee stage, together with consequential drafting stages.

First, the Metropolitan police and the Home Office's police department have said that they believe that the provisions of the Litter Act are adequate for the few occasions — generally serious events — on which their officers are likely to be involved in enforcement of litter laws, although they fully understand the council's desire for fixed penalty tickets to be available for routine enforcement. So fixed penalty powers will not now be made available to the police. Secondly, the council has agreed to withdraw the provision making it an offence not to give a name and address to the authorised officer issuing the fixed penalty notice. That is to minimise potential calls on police time and criminal justice proceedings. The deletion of that provision brings the Bill into line with most of the enforcement carried out by local councils, in which there is no obligation to give a name and address.

Opposition Members will, I am sure, agree that the proposed offence would have steered too close to the former sus law, which I and other hon. Members had a hand in removing. The Westminster city council is satisfied that careful staff training will help to ensure that most people will comply on a voluntary basis with the request for a name and address. Many members of the council's inspectorate are former police officers who understand how to handle these situations. The experience of other organisations that also require names and addresses—for example, London Underground and bus ticket inspectors — is that the great majority of the public provide their identity and address voluntarily.

The third change is one that the council—I shall be frank—is reluctant to concede. It is proposed in the Bill

that the fines levied by way of fixed penalty tickets should be paid ultimately to the city treasurer and directed to a specific fund to offset enforcement costs, and that the surplus should be used to improve further the city's environment. The Home Office has stated that that would be contrary to the national policy on the direction of all fines, which, as the House knows, are due to the Crown. The city council believes that this national policy handicaps many local authorities in effectively implementing enforcement legislation for a range of lesser offences because there is little chance of enforcement being self-financing or of the polluter paying directly for the alleviation of his wrongdoing.

The result of an independent opinion poll conducted for the city council by the Oxford Research Agency was that 77 per cent. of all those interviewed agreed with the council's proposal that the fines be directed to the city treasurer and then to the environmental fund. The council considers that in due course the national policy will have to be changed as part of improvements to local enforcement procedures throughout the country.

In the interim, the council accepts the Home Office request and will propose in Committee that fines enforced by the scheme should be paid into the central funds. A ways and means resolution has been tabled today to enable this action to be taken.

The withdrawal of the three provisions to which I have referred has been the subject of some adverse press comments in recent weeks, with the conjecture that there is profound disagreement among the council, the Home Office and the Metropolitan police. I must inform the House that the media's interpretation is inaccurate. The council is grateful for the personal support of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for the broad objectives of the Bill and for the Commissioner-designate's expectation that there will be a close working relationship between the multi-purpose inspectorate and the local Metropolitan police. The scale of fines has been discussed with the Home Office, which is in agreement with the proposal that the fixed penalty be equal to one tenth of level 2 of the standard scale, which is currently equivalent to £10.

Support for the Bill is widespread. Public statements of support have been received from organisations as diverse as Friends of the Earth, UK 2000, the Keep Britain Tidy group and the London Tourist Board. For example, Friends of the Earth has stated that the Bill

"should benefit all Londoners and visitors by significantly improving our urban environment."

Three seminars held for residents and business associations within Westminster demonstrated clear support for the proposal. The public opinion poll showed a sample of 81 per cent. of residents in Westminster, 77 per cent. of commuters, 84 per cent. of British tourists and 80 per cent. of foreign tourists to be in favour of the proposals. Similar percentages stated that they would be "very pleased" or "quite pleased" if the fixed penalty scheme were introduced. The £10 penalty was thought to be about right by 64 per cent. Only 9 per cent. considered the present method of enforcement to be effective.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman has statistics that I do not have, and I ask him to tell me whether the 20 per cent. or so who were not in favour of the proposal were unable to support it because they did not like the extension of the law in terms of the Bill's provisions or because they included litter louts. It would be interesting to know whether the city council analysed why 20 per cent. did not approve of the proposed legislation.

Mr. Wheeler: That information is not in my possession. I do not know whether the analysis went that far. We might presume that the proverbial litter lout would not be in favour of the proposition. I do not know, but I presume that that would be the position.

All local city, borough and district councils in England and Wales were advised by Westminster city council of its proposed Bill. The council has received 274 replies, all expressing interest, with 112 expressing support in principle, or unqualified support. Support has been offered by officers and councillors representing councils of all political dispositions, including many authorities controlled by the Labour party, such as Bristol, Barnsley and Bolton. There has been support also from authorities controlled by the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party, or a combination of the two.

Mr. Dubs: Is there not all the difference in the world between agreeing in principle to support a measure that is against litter and agreeing in detail to the precise proposals that will be before the House when amendments to the Bill are introduced? To ask whether we are against litter is rather like asking whether we are against sin. It is the detail of how to tackle sin that causes disagreement and dissension. I suggest that many of the authorities that agree in principle will not necessarily agree with the detailed approach.

Mr. Wheeler: The Bill is a simple measure, and in its discussions with other local authorities the city council has had no difficulty in conveying to them the provisions in the Bill in its current form. The concessions that I have offered to the House on behalf of the city council make the Bill in some respects a softer vehicle. It diminishes to a degree perhaps its intention and presumed effectiveness. There can be no doubt that 112 councils which were approached by the city council expressed support for the Bill as presented to the House. That shows the degree of support that the council has throughout the country for this measure, and to that extent it is something of a legislative acorn. It is to be hoped that its objectives and principles will grow, should the House see fit to pass the Bill.

Many councils have stated that if Westminster city council's Bill is successful they will seek similar powers or press for similar national legislation. I think that that deals with the point that the hon. Member for Battersea put rather well. That is surely the central issue for the House to bear in mind this evening. Westminster has taken the imaginative step of proposing a Bill that offers better scope for the enforcement of the Litter Act 1983. It is a valuable initiative which I hope will be monitored closely by the city council, by other local authorities, the Home Office, the Metropolitan police, the Department of the Environment and by other agencies such as Keep Britain Tidy. It offers a practical addition to legislation in an area where action is sorely needed.

The Bill's proponents do not pretend that it is perfect, and it is rare to hear that said in the Chamber. My remarks about the destination of the fines will have been noted especially, but I believe that the House should consider favourably the principles and proposals that are set out in the Bill, which may prove to be widely adopted by other authorities in due course.

7.29 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I blocked this Bill when the House was first asked to give it a Second Reading. I do not think that I did Westminster city council any disservice, because it was only on 29 April that the council was able to secure a confirmatory resolution. I believe that the council has played ducks and drakes with the House in the past about this legislation. It has not been sufficiently aware of the needs of its internal practices or of the wishes and requirements of the House in bringing forward this legislation.

In blocking the Bill I was able to secure a debate on Second Reading, because several important principles should be debated. I accept that I am not gazing on packed Benches and therefore most hon. Members are not so concerned about the principles as I and a few of my colleagues are, but we should have an opportunity to discuss the principles before the Bill goes into Committee.

We shall all be saying tonight that the object of the Bill, to reduce the amount of litter deposited on the streets, must be supported by all Members. It is unfortunate that Londoners seem to be among the worst litter louts in the country. That is not easy for a London Member of Parliament to say, but I will go further and say that I am distressed by the amount of litter deposited on the streets in my borough of Newham.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and say that the City's centre of gravity is to the east, rather than in the city of Westminster. I know that not many tourists yet come to Newham, despite the attractions we have to offer them, so the litter on our streets is deposited by the residents. I live in my constituency and, when I go around the corner in the morning to get my newspaper from near the Princess Alice, I am often confronted by the ugly eyesore of litter on the streets. Many people stop me and say, "What will the council do about this?" It is a problem for councils. I have as much regard for Westminster's problems as I do for the problems of the London borough of Newham. I point out to those people that it is not the councillors who go around dropping litter on the streets. The habits of the people who live in the area should be looked at, rather than the policies of the local authority.

I have always advocated to my colleagues, while I was both in and out of local government, that if councils can collect the refuse on time, ensure that the streets are clean and the street lights are on, they are most of the way to getting the total support of the population. The population will let councils have as many sub-committees as they want, as long as they provide the basic services, because people form their impressions of local authorities on the basis of the refuse collection service and the state of the streets, even though it is unfair to blame the local authority for the state of the streets.

I accept that Westminster has a problem with the large number of tourists, visitors and people who work within its boundaries, including Members of Parliament. If I saw a Member of Parliament dropping litter on the street, I would be the first to see that he got a fixed penalty, once that measure is introduced.

Mr. Wheeler: Before the hon. Gentleman issued the fixed penalty, he would perhaps invite the hon. Member to recover the litter, so that only at the end of a discussion would he feel that he would have to proceed to a fixed penalty.

Mr. Banks: That is one of the things which bothers me about this Bill. Some people drop litter in the streets because they are forgetful, but the anti-social nature of people who drop litter extends to other aspects of their personality, including sticking one on somebody who says, "Would you mind picking that up?" I confess that I am a devout coward and when I see someone dropping litter in the street I make a fairly quick mental assessment about whether or not I could ask the person to pick up the litter without fear of danger to myself. I have often decided that discretion is the better part of valour and I have allowed the paper to stay there or I have picked it up as I tut-tutted.

Some people who drop litter can be fairly objectionable when someone points out to them that they have just done something wrong. Many people get stroppy when they know they have done something wrong and someone points it out to them. That is one of the reasons why I asked the hon. Member for Westminster, North whether the relevant trade unions had been consulted and were in agreement with this legislation. I imagine that if I were still a union official I would be asking the employer questions such as "How many times do you have to ask the person?", "What if the person offers violence?" and "Will my members be given additional security support; for example, two-way radios?". The hon. Member did not raise that matter, but it is something on which the Committee can decide. There is a security aspect because there is a potential threat to the safety of the employee who will have to ask litter louts to pick up the litter. That must be taken into consideration by the promoters.

The Government, having recognised that dropping litter is a social problem, should have been prepared to have introduced wider national campaigns to try to get the message through at an earlier stage. For example, it should be a continual feature of education in schools. Littering affects our way of life; it is not just an accident in which one is involved.

People live in a chuck-away society. The hon. Member for Westminster, North mentioned that companies promote their goods with more and more packaging, and are thereby encouraging litter louts. Manufacturers who use packaging should be asked to make some form of reparation to the state for the amount of ammunition they place in the hands of litter louts. The Minister may care to reflect on the need for more national and local campaigns and more education in schools about litter. He may care also to take up the point raised by his hon. Friend as to whether there are any proposals to enforce and change the current litter legislation and the penalties incurred by those who drop litter. I would argue for a coherent national strategy, which I am sure would be welcomed by all hon. Members.

I have a number of objections to the Bill. First, I object to the manner in which this Bill has been promoted—not in the House, because the hon. Member for Westminster, North has done a very good job. He and I have had discussions, since the Bill first appeared on the Order Paper, about the provisions, how the debate would go and what we were trying to achieve.

I object to the way that the Bill has been promoted outside the House. We have had a plethora of litter in the form of press releases from the city of Westminster's press office. The latest one, dated 1 May, entitled "Litter Bill takes another step forward", points out that the special resolution passed by the council on 29 April meant that the council's

"much-publicised Litter Bill took a major step towards becoming law last night . . . when the Council passed a Motion which will enable the House of Commons to give it a second reading."

Whether the House of Commons consents to give it a Second Reading is something for the House of Commons to decide. I ask the Minister whether the press release is an accurate reflection of the Government's policy. It says:

"The Bill, which is supported by the Government, will get its second reading on May 7."

That is fairly optimistic. It goes on:

"Hitting at reports that Home Office amendments would emasculate the proposed legislation, Lady Porter, Leader of the Council, said: 'The Home Office, which have expressed total support for the Bill, believe that it would not be practical for the Police to give litter offenders a fixed penalty ticket. We are quite happy to accept that advice.'".

There is some straining of the truth in that press release. The Government clearly did not support the Bill as it was proposed. The hon. Member for Westminster, North has already told us about the discussions that took place between the leader of the Westminster city council and the Home Secretary, or officials of her council and the Home Office, on the amendments which the promoters are now prepared to accept. I do not know whether the Minister is happy with that description.

As for the Home Office expressing full support for the Bill, again that is rather straining at the truth. As my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said in an intervention, we are all against litter being dropped. Clearly, every Department of State or local authority that might have written to Westminster city council would, on being asked their opinion about the dropping of litter, express their support for measures which seek to eliminate such litter dropping. However, Westminster has gone heavy on the publicity on this without having checked to see that its claims are accurate.

In a way, the Bill is very much a piece of private enterprise by the leader of Westminster city council. Many of us know that she takes a highly individualistic approach to local government. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East, (Mr. Atkinson) says, "Very good." Whether one thinks that the estimable Shirley Porter is someone that one can go along with depends on the hue of one's politics. It will not surprise hon. Members or the good lady herself to hear that I find her politics anathema. I have some regard for her, but I cannot say that it stretches to affection.

However, I shall not make a personal issue out of this, despite her highly irresponsible attitude towards strategic local government in London. She was one of those Tory town hall toadies who put party politics before the needs of London in respect of the abolition of the GLC. Nevertheless, I do not want any hon. Member to think that this colours my feelings towards Westminster city council or the Bill.

There has been little if any consultation with the other London local authorities, either Labour or Tory, on the Bill. I understand that the London Boroughs Association, the Tory association in London, has reservations about the Bill. I know the views of the Association of London Authorities, the Labour grouping in the capital. In response to a request from me for the ALA's opinion, the secretary, Derek Prentice, said:

"What is of more concern however is that the London Coordinating Committee agreed that the promotion of such Bills should be handled by the two London Local Authority Associations in order that a comprehensive approach to such issues could be adopted. Clearly in this case Westminster has decided to go it alone and therefore the contents of the Bill have not benefited from a London-wide discussion and input."

That is a serious point because other local authorities, and, indeed, the House, are in danger of being railroaded by the leader of Westminster city council.

As we all know, if such a proposal had surfaced in the past it would probably have been part of a general powers Bill sponsored by the GLC which would have come after a great deal of consultation within London. We have not had such consultation over this Bill.

My second objection is one of principle, not to stopping people dropping litter, but to the Bill's proposals for the power to levy fixed penalties to be extended to council officers. I do not favour a further extension of fixed penalty powers beyond those that already exist within the capital. I certainly do not approve of them being extended to local authority officers.

One of the things that bothers me is that the power might not stop at local authority officers. It could involve another group of people. Westminster city council is, as one would expect under the leadership of Lady Porter, keen on privatising as many of its services as it possibly can. One knows that waste disposal services in Westminster are being examined as a potential candidate for privatisation. Can the hon. Member for Westminster, North tell me what will happen if Westminster privatises the services where council officers are charged with handing out fixed penalty tickets? Will that be part of the privatisation proposal? It is bad enough council officers being given these powers, but the thought that the powers might be handed over to Securicor or to an enforcement branch of a private cleansing company would raise more objections about the principles within the Bill.

Mr. Wheeler: The Bill, which the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to study later, says:

"'authorised officer' means an officer of the council authorised by the council in writing to act in relation to the provisions of this Act".

I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that that makes the matter clear. It is to be an authorised officer of the council. Finally, there is nothing novel in a citizen seeking to enforce the law of the United Kingdom. Such rights exist for us all.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman does me a disservice by suggesting that I have not read the Bill. I have underlined the part that he has just quoted because I wondered how comprehensive it would be in a new situation.

On Second Reading one is supposed to stick to principles, but I am not likely to find myself on the Opposed Bill Committee, much as I should like that. Therefore, can the hon. Gentleman tell me whether, if Westminster city council privatised the services, an authorised officer could be someone who was part of a service that was carrying out official duties on behalf of the authority but was acting as an agent of the council but employed by another organisation? That is one of the points I am worried about.

Of course, we all have the power to make a citizen's arrest but we do not all have the ability to go round issuing fixed penalty tickets when we see people doing things wrong. If I were allowed to do so, I could think of a range of things for which, in my eccentric way, I would like to

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give people fixed penalty tickets. However, I doubt whether the House would give me such powers and so I shall quickly move on.

Let me return to waste disposal in Westminster, which is the central part of the Bill. Westminster city council is not above and beyond criticism. It likes to make great play of its efficiency, but I noticed recently that the district auditor ruled that the council had acted improperly in failing to charge for trade refuse collection, something that the council conceded. I should like to know why the district auditor did not recommend that Lady Porter should be surcharged for that. After all, there was clearly a failure to carry out fiduciary duties on behalf of ratepayers. Having been in a number of altercations with the district auditor about surcharge, I must say I think he missed a trick on that occasion.

The hon. Gentleman must know—because he is a Westminster Member, and no doubt he lives in his constituency—that Westminster's cleansing department consistently out-performs those of many other London councils. I doubt whether it out-performs the refuse collection department in the London borough of Newham, but it certainly out-performs many others. Yet, as I understand it—this returns me to my earlier point—Westminster is paying consultants £25,000 in fees to plan the privatisation of refuse collection in the borough. I should like to know—the matter will no doubt need to be pushed in cross-examination in the Opposed Bill Committee — what will happen to that aspect of Westminster's refuse responsibilities in the Bill if the House is minded to grant the powers sought.

I gather that Westminster has earmarked 13 services for competitive tendering. Clearly, the function of issuing fixed penalties for litter dropping is one that the council's Tory leadership will wish to privatise at a later date, unless the House specifically precludes it in the Committee stage. I hope that, when hon. Members get round to reading this debate, they will think carefully about imposing such a condition.

Let me deal now with the objections of the police. We have heard some of them this evening. I feel that it would have been far better if, before the Bill was brought forward, Westminster had consulted in some depth not only the London boroughs but the Home Office and its Ministers. After all, there is considerable political affinity between the Home Office Ministers and the leadership of Westminster city council. Besides, it is not as if the distance between their headquarters was very great.

It seems rather strange that the Home Office has recommended, in such a way as not to be refused or gainsaid, suggestions for amendments at the Committee stage. I asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary a question on Wednesday 6 May, to which he replied making it clear that discussions had taken place between the Home Office and Westminster, and that a series of amendments that would effectively knock a chunk out of the middle of the Bill were being proposed by the Home Office and accepted by the Bill's promoters. It is a pity that Westminster had not done that beforehand; a great deal of time could have been saved.

I also wrote to the police to find out what objections they had to the Bill. Although amendments have now been made, I should like to read into the record the letter that I received from Assistant Commissioner G. D. McLean of New Scotland Yard. It reads:

"I am replying to your letter of 30 March to the Commissioner about the City of Westminster Bill. Our formal observations on the Bill were conveyed to the Home Office by letters dated 19 January and 20 March."

That is very late in the passage of a piece of private legislation for the Home Office to be consulting the police—or, indeed, for the police to be asked by the Home Office. I think that that reinforces the point that I made earlier.

The letter continues:

"Briefly, we support in principle Westminster City Council's initiatives to deal with the litter problem but we have reservations about the way in which those initiatives are proposed to be implemented by way of this Bill. In particular, we would not wish to see any active police involvement in the issue of 'fixed penalty notices' for litter offences and we would be concerned about the possibility of involvement by police at a secondary level in dealing with disputes between the City Council's authorised officer and the alleged offender to whom a fixed penalty notice was issued.

Naturally we do not relish the prospect of this involvement at a time when our initiatives are being directed at more serious matters and the utilisation of resources are under continuing close scrutiny."

It is clear that, if the police had been asked earlier, they would have told Westminster council officers what provisions should be put into the Bill to make it acceptable to the Metropolitan police and, in turn, to the Home Office.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North said that amendments proposed by the Home Office were being accepted. I understand that the Minister is prepared to accept that assurance, and that the House will not be asked to issue any directions to the Opposed Bill Committee. I trust that the members of that Committee will pay some heed to what was said on Second Reading, and will ensure that that happens.

To sum up my remarks about my second objection, I believe that the police should have been consulted considerably earlier, and certainly before the Bill was published.

I cannot escape the thought that, although the Bill has a good central intention, it has been used very much as an ego trip by the leader of Westminster city council. As I have said, Westminster is a wealthy borough, but the hon. Member for Westminster, North correctly pointed out that there is a good deal of poverty within it. It is a pity that Westminster city corporation does not direct its attention to doing more to alleviate that poverty.

Mr. Wheeler: It does.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman says that it does. However, I understand that Westminster has spent well over £40,000 on campaigning in relation to the Bill. It had good lobbyists. I know them well, and they have done a good job with fairly poor material. But I remember the time when the leader of the council bitterly attacked the Greater London council for spending ratepayers' money on what she considered to be propaganda.

There is an element of double standards here. I understand that Westminster is now spending over £1 million on public relations: that is a great deal of money to be spent by a borough which, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, has many problems. Many Conservative Members would call the things that Westminster is doing propaganda on the rates if they were being done by a

Labour council. However, in a Tory authority they are considered a proper and fitting use of ratepayers' money, although I do not think that that is necessarily true. Westminster is now spending a higher percentage of its budget on public relations than the GLC did on a London-wide basis. It is no wonder that the leader of Westminster city council has been referred to, somewhat unflatteringly, as Ken Livingstone in drag.

While we know that Westminster's litter problem is fairly acute, I feel that the Bill shows that its priorities are wrong. Surely a council that has underspent by some £11 million in the past two years on housing and housing repairs could use its great promotional ability to do something about the level of poverty within its boundaries, and campaign for more resources from central Government so that something could be done about the scandal of bed-and-breakfast accommodation from which Westminster tends to suffer. As well as those within its boundaries, it has to take in a large number of people from other boroughs. My own borough of Newham, for example, has been forced to send people to bed-and-breakfast accommodation in boroughs such as Westminster.

Rather than bringing forward this Bill, we should like Westminster to do something about the 10,000 on its waiting lists and its 6,000 homeless families. We should like it to do rather more than build nine council houses, as it did last year, or proposes to do this year. It is pathetic, and shows that the Tory leadership of Westminster city council has a perverse set of priorities.

How effective will the Bill be? I understand that in some of its propaganda Westminster claims that its ratepayers will save a great deal of money. I should like to know how much Westminster ratepayers will save. If everybody stopped dropping litter, it would save the council a very great deal of money but we should like the savings that Westminster intends to secure by this legislation, if it is passed, to be quantified.

Earlier I asked the hon. Member for Westminster, North why Westminster has only brought one prosecution in the last three years for the dropping of litter in its streets. Westminster already has the power to prosecute. Through its public relations department, which seems to be growing larger and larger under the leadership of Lady Porter, it has made a great deal of fuss about people dropping litter, and it could have prosecuted them in the courts, using the existing legislation. That would have had a great impact on potential litter louts.

I accept that the existing legislation is unsatisfactory, but Westminster could have used its great influence in the Conservative party to persuade Ministers to introduce legislation to cover the whole country, not just Westminster. I hope that the Minister will give us his views about further legislation.

I should also like to know how many additional staff Westminster proposes to employ, if this legislation is passed. I can probably answer that question myself. It is a big zilch. The council will employ no additional staff. And if Westminster is granted these powers, I wonder how effective its policing of the legislation will be. I should also like to know what negotiations there have been with the unions and whether they agree with these proposals.

The Bill is designed to deal with people who make a mess. The Bill is a complete mess, and it has not been assisted by the Government's amendments. It owes much more to Westminster city council's obsessional desire for publicity than it does to a serious attempt to deal with a serious problem in Westminster and throughout this capital city. The Bill is decidedly bedraggled and it will undoubtedly be further amended in the Opposed Bill Committee.

It is not my intention to force a Division, but I suggest that the promoters should quietly drop it, in so far as Westminster city council is capable of doing anything quietly, and wait for a coherent attempt to deal with litter louts who affect not only Westminster but our capital city and many other cities.

8.2 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I offer a warm welcome to this long overdue Bill and congratulate Westminster city council on its initiative. My colleague, the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), has asked me to associate him with these remarks.

The Bill has the enthusiastic support of my council, the Bournemouth borough council. Like Westminster, Bournemouth is very much in the business of tourism and welcomes many thousands of visitors from home and abroad every year. Our new international conference centre—the Labour party enjoyed it the year before last and my party enjoyed it last year—and the growing number of all-year-round, all-weather leisure facilities will, we hope, attract even more visitors.

As with Westminster, litter is a seemingly uncontrollable problem. It has grown with the number of take-away food shops, although the fault does not lie with them. They are usually very co-operative in providing bins and in appealing to their customers to be tidy. However, we in Bournemouth cannot ignore the fact that the borough receives letters of complaint from visitors, including letters from abroad — I have had them myself — that demonstrate that they find the litter on our streets and beaches and in our parks and gardens wholly incompatible with the clean, attractive and elegant resort which, of course, Bournemouth is. It is putting them off returning to us.

A recent tourism study of Bournemouth and south-east Dorset has shown that, while the town is highly favoured as a holiday resort, a major criticism of it is the amount of litter on its streets. But, like Westminster, until now we have been powerless and frustrated in dealing with this problem. For several years now we have been urging that there should be legislation of this kind to provide local authorities with the power to impose on-the-spot fines on those found dropping litter. That would act as an effective deterrent. Apparently, it works in other European countries.

Representations have been made through the Association of District Councils and, through me, to successive Governments. However, the last Labour Government concluded that such powers would be undesirable—that legislation of that kind would impair relations between the police, who would have the responsibility for implementing the powers, and the public. It was understood that the police were opposed to being placed in this position. In any case, it was felt that they were better occupied in fighting crime. We can all sympathise with that.

There has, therefore, been a singular lack of prosecutions under the Litter Act 1983, as my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) has already said. Governments continue to resort to education

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and persuasion and there is no doubt that the Keep Britain Tidy group is doing an excellent job. But the problem remains, and it is growing. If the Bill is passed, undoubtedly a great many local authorities such as mine will seek similar powers. Indeed, instead of wasting parliamentary time on private Bills of this nature, perhaps there ought to be a Government Bill to deal with the problem. I look forward to hearing the views of my hon. Friend the Minister on that point.

Turning to the Bill itself, at first sight the prospect of authorised municipal officers roaming the streets to nab and fine may be regarded as more characteristic of Eastern Europe, but that is not what the Bill proposes. The precedent for what it proposes has long been set by traffic wardens and fixed penalties. I understand that Westminster city council already has officers who are authorised to control street markets and to deal with other planning considerations. Henceforth, they will have the power to approach those whom they see drop litter—not to impose a fine but to ask that it be picked up. Only a refusal will lead to a fixed penalty which I should have thought was wholly reasonable.

Once the public get to know the form in this way, the problem will be overcome. My only reservation is that I hope that these officers will always try to avoid fining visitors from abroad. I foresee headlines in foreign newspapers that will wholly distort the picture. It will create an unjustified image here that will not be at all helpful to our tourist prospects.

I hope that the whole House will applaud Westminster city council on its initiative and, indeed, on its entire cleaner city experiment. We in Bournemouth will be closely following the passage of the Bill and will seek to introduce our own as soon as possible.

8.8 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) graphically described the litter problem in the city of Westminster. All hon. Members understand that the problem is at its most severe in the city of Westminster because of the vast body of visitors, commuters and tourists who throng its streets.

The problem is getting worse almost daily. Westminster city council states that the volume of litter taken from its streets has increased by about 20 per cent. in the last three years. The rapid increase in littering means that we cannot hang around waiting for a perfect solution to arrive from central Government. The Westminster initiative may not be perfect and may have to be refined, but at least Westminster is having a go at the problem, and that is welcomed.

Over the years much effort has been directed to solving this problem. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to the Westminster city council's cleaner city campaign, a very interesting initiative that was followed up by a number of other local authorities in sponsoring litter bins and so on. That campaign, despite all the effort that went into it, did not slow down littering in our streets, which in London has been aggravated by the rise in the number of visitors over recent years.

In 1976 there were 7¼ million visitors to London from overseas and about 11 million from other parts of the United Kingdom, a total of a little over 18¼ million. By 1985 that had shot up to more than 9 million overseas visitors and 14 million visitors from other parts of the United Kingdom, a total of over 23 million people visiting London in one year—a 26 per cent. increase over a nine-year period.

I do not suggest that we should blame the litter problem on those who visit our city. There is some evidence to suggest that visitors are more concerned about litter and in general have a better performance in that respect than some of the inhabitants of London. But the sheer number of visitors means that there is more litter even if the percentage of visitors doing the littering is comparatively small.

Other hon. Members referred to the need for an education campaign, which I support, but we have been trying that. I have sponsored many of the Keep Britain Tidy group efforts to undertake sensible initiatives in our schools to try to get this message across to young people before they reach maturity. Perhaps these initiatives did not have sufficient resources behind them, but they really have not been able to struggle against and have been overwhelmed by the sheer momentum of the increase in litter.

In my own borough of Greenwich, which is another very important tourist area of London, virtually all our shopping centres are a sea of litter by the end of a shopping day, with the rubbish blowing everywhere in the wind. The fast food chains have a lot to answer for in generating litter. A number of them—McDonalds are probably the foremost among them—go to great lengths to try to tackle the problem even to the extent of having a litter patrol to collect some of the refuse from their own operations. Away from the shopping centres, residential streets which are probably swept once a week become a sea of accumulated paper and piles of bottles and tins. Many residential streets in areas like the one in which I live are disfigured in this way.

There is the problem of public open spaces. My local authority provides very pleasant small parks and garden areas which ought to be a delight for people to enjoy; but they are not, because flower beds and grassed areas are spoiled by bottles, cans, ice-cream wrappers, cigarette wrappers and the whole plethora of rubbish dumped by insensitive and unfeeling people.

The wooded areas, of which there is a vast expanse in my area, come in for very heavy and systematic dumping of large black sacks of accumulated refuse, furniture and other things. It is not necessary to dump in the woods because my authority, like many others, operates a very effective and efficient recycling depot which can collect and take in that sort of rubbish.

Mr. Tony Banks: Who constructed it?

Mr. Cartwright: Indeed, it was a recycling depot that we inherited from the Greater London Council—one of the forward looking steps of the GLC, and I am in favour of that recycling approach to litter—but we have not got across to people that they do not need to take rubbish into the woods but can take it to the recycling depot.

One of the most depressing things that I see when driving in and out from my home to this House is the car or lorry driver in front who winds down the window and throws out accumulated litter in the cab—cigarette ends, cigarette packets, apple cores, or whatever. It all goes out of the vehicle and on to the road.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West said that these people are anti-social. I accept that some of them are,

but many of them are downright thoughtless. The saddest aspect of the public attitude to litter is that we are beginning to learn to live with it. People have stopped complaining about it, because they say, "What is the good of complaining?" Nobody cares, and the problem continues to grow and get worse; the more we become accustomed to lower standards, the worse our environment comes.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether there is any alliance policy on the problem of litter, particularly in terms of requiring manufacturers to spend a proportion of their profits on finding ways of making their packaging biodegradable.

Mr. Cartwright: We follow the same policy in the alliance as in other parties, that the polluter should pay. A great deal more could be done by manufacturers to encourage by a combination of stick and carrot, but at the end of the day even biodegradable refuse is left lying on the streets for a long time before it biodegrades, and in that sense it is degrading our environment while that process continues.

We have heard of the defects of the Litter Act 1983, which has not tackled litter. Nationwide there has been a singular lack of prosecutions. The police feel, with understanding from most members of the public, that they have more important functions than to struggle with littering. In any case, the Act is not cost effective. The likely cost of a prosecution under the Act is about £200 and the average fine would be about £40. Cash spent on pursuing individual prosecutions through the courts would be better utilised in dealing on the ground with a large number of offenders through the fixed penalty approach. That is why I support the general aims and approach of this Bill. Any sensible initiative to support this Bill has to be tried. A fixed penalty system that works is preferable to the cumbersome procedures of the Litter Act.

Having enforcement officers asking people to pick up litter, with the back-up of the fixed penalty system, could have an impact on people's behaviour, and that is what the Bill is trying to achieve. The Bill, to be effective, has to have not just an effective punitive system, but a proper information and advertising campaign. I understand that is part of the Westminster approach.

I am sorry that the Government appear to have decided that all fines should go into the Exchequer rather than back to Westminster city council. If the number of fixed penalty notices is small because offenders pick up the litter when they are asked, there would still be an incentive for Westminster in having less litter. If Westminster does not receive revenue from fines, it has little initiative to issue penalty notices or to increase the number of enforcement officers. I should have thought that, when central Government is telling local authorities to tighten their belts, a little in-built financial incentive from the Government would not have gone amiss.

Like other hon. Members who have spoken, I am interested in the wider application of these powers. There is a great deal of public interest and support, and certainly much interest and support, too, from local authorities across the political spectrum. We have to ask what form the development of such a power will take. Will other councils be expected to promote their own legislation? Will we have to wait years for central Government legislation or can we not ask for an enabling measure so that the local authorities which want it will have power to do something? That is the way forward rather than requiring every authority to do exactly the same about the problem. I hope the Government will say that such enabling leglislation will be forthcoming.

Mr. Tony Banks: They have only got about three days.

Mr. Cartwright: There will be an Administration in power. Whichever Administration is in power, I hope that such an approach to the problem will be an important priority. All of us agree that litter disfigures our major cities, particularly London. It contributes to the shabby, dingy, down-at-heel appearance which too much of central London now gives.

There is also broad agreement that the quality of the environment must be improved. The fight against litter, however mundane it may appear, is very much part of the fight to improve the quality of life in London. To win the fight we need to change public attitudes. A punitive system on its own cannot do that. But the Bill, backed up by an education and information campaign, can contribute to the changes that we all want to see. For those reasons I support the Bill.

8.21 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I spent some years as a Westminster city councillor. Although these issues were not before the council at the time, I am fairly familiar with the problems of the city of Westminster. It is perhaps a matter of regret that this is not an occasion for me to say what I think about the council's appalling housing policy, the homelessness, the neglect of social services, the difficulties elderly people face and so on. The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) should be familiar with those problems. One difficulty underlying Westminster's approach is polarisation because the affluent areas of the city are so far away from the poorer areas. All too often city hall is remote from the poor and disadvantaged people in the northern part of the city who desperately need more attention than they are getting.

I agree with the hon. Member for Westminster, North that litter is an enormous problem. We are an extremely wasteful society. I wish local authorities went to more trouble to separate litter that can be recycled from litter that cannot. As a society we are exploiting our planet and we are not seeking to minimise the damage that we are doing to it. Litter is one manifestation of that damage.

London has always struck me as a particularly dirty city —and by London I mean inner London and the city of Westminster. It is always remarkable how much cleaner cities in the north of England are. That may be because of tourism or it may be because many cities in the north have Labour authorities which deal better with such things. At any rate, it is disagreeable to note on arriving back in London how dirty it is. To that extent, I agree that there is a problem.

Of course, litter on the streets encourages more litter. If people see litter lying about, they will not look for rubbish bins but will simply throw the extra bits of paper on the street. If our cities were cleaner, there might be more pressure on individuals to throw their rubbish into rubbish bins and not on the street.

Given the difficulties, the streets of the city of Westminster are not at all bad. I fear that if the street cleaning services are privatised—as the threat appears to

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be—standards will go down. I need only to invoke the experience of the borough of Wandsworth, in which my constituency is situated, to show what happens when a council hands over responsibility to a private firm. The streets get dirtier and dirtier.

We are all against litter, and it is understandable that other local authorities are interested in any initiative which seeks to reduce litter. The hon. Member for Westminster, North read a list of local authorities that were for the Bill either in principle or in detail; he used words similar to those. There is all the difference in the world between being interested in an idea in principle and supporting it in detail. I suspect that many local authorities that have shown an interest in the scheme would be interested in any new idea that attempted to deal with the problem of litter, but most of them are not necessarily in support of the details because the details represent a sticking point. Therefore, I do not think that the hon. Member for Westminster, North should have said that all these authorities are in support of the Bill. I do not believe that support in principle represents support for the Bill as it stands.

In contrast to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I am not sure that for all the money that has been spent Westminster city council lobbyists have done all that good a job. It was only yesterday afternoon that I first received background information. Then I got something from them in the post today. Fortunately, I still have friends on Westminster city council who were able to brief me more thoroughly than the city council itself did, although I had a conversation with an official in city hall about some details this morning. That was when I first learnt about the amendments that are to be introduced later.

I have several reservations. My first reservation is that we are told by the sponsor of the Bill that three major amendments are to be introduced. I can understand that, on Second Reading, sometimes criticisms may provoke a Minister or the sponsor of the Bill to say, having heard the arguments, that there may be a case for changes in Committee. But what we were told today by the hon. Member for Westminster, North as soon as he started was that there would be three amendments. What is more, those amendments will not deal with minor points of detail to tidy up small matters, but amendments which will change the Bill fundamentally.

I think that it is virtually without precedent for us to be presented with a Bill and to be told on its Second Reading that it is not right and will be completely different if it is passed. The House should not be treated in that way. The first I knew of these changes was late yesterday afternoon when I got a letter from someone who had been advising the city council. I learnt more about it this morning. It must be unheard of for the House to be presented with a Bill and to be told, "We have got it all wrong; we will make three major changes but you will have to wait and see because we cannot give you the details now."

The Bill will require much amendment to incorporate these three changes. Given the length of time the Bill has been around since Westminster city council embarked upon it, the least that could have been done was to withdraw the Bill and present it later in the form in which the council would like it to be. It is treating the House with less than normal courtesy and respect to deal with it in this way.

My second reservation concerns whether the measure will work. If I thought it would work, I would support it, but I have serious doubts about it. My first doubt concerns the 60 individuals who are called the multi-purpose inspectorate. Apart from the fact that all my instincts tell me that an expression like "the multi-purpose inspectorate" ought to be thrown out of the window and that we should start again with common sense English, I find it hard to see how this system will work.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North, who is sponsoring the Bill, said that there would be a means of identification. I understand that the inspectors will have badges. For some purposes they will not wear badges because when they are inspecting street trading it is better that they come upon the scene unannounced and then identify themselves. I do not know the background; there may or may not be good reasons for that. But if they are going to various parts of Westminster looking for litter louts, they will put on a badge. I question whether this is good enough. I question whether the process of approaching an individual and telling him that he must pay a penalty would work. If the individual does not pay the penalty, he is liable to be charged with a criminal offence, if I understand the system corectly. That is quite serious. I am not sure that a multi-purpose inspectorate, not easily identifiable and getting into a very sensitive area indeed, will be in a position to enforce this in a satisfactory way.

We are told that the inspectorate will consist, at least partly, of former police officers and that they will have had experience of dealing with these matters. But what about the others? It is one thing to visit a street stall and see whether all the traders are licensed by the city council. That is a straightforward process and should be easily understood, and street traders are aware of a local authority's powers in this respect. It is quite another matter to approach an individual in the street and, possibly after attempted conciliation, such as saying, "Why do you not pick that up, otherwise you are for it?", to deal with the matter in what could be a difficult situation. People will not be particularly amenable to being reprimanded. The majority may be, but some will not. I wonder whether the inspectors will be able to do this job properly unless they can be easily identified.

Mr. Hanley: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would disqualify those who currently do the valuable job of traffic warden because of the problems that he has just mentioned.

Mr. Dubs: Not at all; the position of traffic wardens is entirely different. Traffic wardens are easily identified. They wear a uniform and they have one function only—to be traffic wardens. Secondly, they are concerned with where vehicles are parked. They are not obliged to get a name and address from an individual. Their job is to slap a parking ticket on a vehicle. I appreciate that sometimes they may have a bit of an altercation with a motorist who arrives as the parking ticket is being put on the car. Nevertheless, their job is to identify the motor car, not the driver. That comes later.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman must admit that traffic wardens take part in traffic management in the

metropolis, and their background is not that of the police. They are ordinary citizens who have been trained. Surely the inspectors which my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) mentioned would be similarly trained and would probably have a similar background.

Mr. Dubs: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but I believe that he is missing the point. When traffic wardens are carrying out one of the other functions, such as acting on point duty, their job is still to point cars in particular directions and give signals. They are dealing essentially with vehicles. That is rather different from approaching an individual and saying, "You have committed an offence and I am going to give you this ticket; if you do not pay up, you will have committed a criminal offence." It seems to me that the likelihood of altercations, confrontations and arguments is much greater. That is why I issue a warning that it may not work quite so easily. If someone approaches an individual and tells him to pick up litter that he has dropped, he may get a rather unparliamentary reply. Then the individual may say, "Anyway, who are you?" The reply will be, "I am a multi-purpose inspector." I leave hon. Members to judge how that will develop.

The inspectors may be issued with smart uniforms, will look as if they represent officialdom and will be given the status and backing necessary for them to do their job. All I am saying is that I do not see the system working easily on the basis of the information that we have had so far.

There are other difficulties. What happens if people throw litter from motor cars? One often sees a motor car going along and out comes a bit of paper, a cigarette packet, or whatever. It is not clear to me whether the multi-purpose inspectors will have the power to record the registration number of the vehicle and then do something about it or whether they can simply use their powers, and get the name and address of the individual so as to issue the necessary ticket. I suspect from the way in which the Bill has been drafted that motorists will be exempt from this.

My third reservation is this. Surely what we are doing in effect, although in fact we are not creating a new offence —and I understand that—is creating a new offence, because, although the offence of littering is on the statute book, it is not being enforced at the moment. So that there will be one part of the country, the city of Westminster, in which throwing down a cigarette paper, a packet or a sweet paper will now be an offence and something will be done about it. To that extent, the city of Westminster will be quite different from any other part of the country, or indeed any other part of London. I am reluctant to go along with having an offence which will be treated quite differently in one part of the country as compared with another. It will lead to misunderstanding and uncertainty, quite apart from the obvious problem of what happens on the boundary between Westminster and Kensington or Westminster and Camden and how far along Westbourne Park road an individual was when he threw down the litter. These are obvious problems, and perhaps the inspectors will steer clear of the boundary areas.

Far more likely to cause difficulties is the positon of visitors to London from other parts of the country, for they will suddenly find themselves becoming well nigh criminals for doing something which at home they certainly should not do—and I do not condone their behaviour—but for which there is no penalty. I question whether we should change the law in this respect in one part of the country only. I believe that this is a point of principle to which we should address ourselves. If we had a Government measure which sought to strengthen anti-litter legislation on a national basis, we would have the benefit of everybody in the country knowing what was going on. There would be a uniformity of enforcement procedures throughout the country and people would not be able to say that they thought they were in Kensington rather than Westminster, that the law is unfair and they will not give their names and addresses.

These are real problems because we are dealing with a problem on the street, not with a ticket on a motor car. This is a pretty sensitive matter. In practice, the multi-purpose inspectors will obviously steer clear of the difficulties. They would not be human if they did not, knowing that they have no powers to back up what they are doing. There will be no police officers to help them because police officers cannot get involved in this, as we understand from the amendments.

Therefore, I envisage enormous difficulties. My original instinct was to welcome this legislation, but the more I think about it the greater become my misgivings about whether it will be workable. It is a question not of the aim or the motive but of whether it is workable.

I cannot help feeling that the right approach would be a national one in terms of both uniformity of enforcement of the legislation and massive national publicity. I agree that Westminster has gone in for publicity, and I am sure that at a local level that has been beneficial; and it does have more litter bins than other local authorities. But I do not think that this matter should be left to one local authority. We are seeking to influence people's attitudes, to make people more conscious of pollution and of the harm that they are doing by throwing their rubbish down rather than putting it in rubbish bins and receptacles. Therefore, we need a national approach and a national education campaign.

Furthermore, I should like to see most packaging material and most of the plastic bags issued by department stores carrying an exhortation to the individual to put the item in a rubbish bin and not to dispose of it in the street. If we had a national campaign or effort, we might begin to get somewhere and, in that process, we could consider what sorts of sanctions there ought to be against individuals who ignore them and how they should be enforced.

I am sorry that I cannot give the measure my enthusiastic blessing because we are all aware how difficult the problem is. Although we in Britain are worse at littering our streets than people in some other countries, it is clearly not just a British problem. I should like to say that it is a wonderful idea and to give it an enthusiastic welcome, but it is not workable. It has not been thought through properly and, therefore, I felt obliged to express my reservations this evening.

8.41 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): Before the debate closes, I should like to say that, while the House recognises the sincerity of the objections raised by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), they seem to be ones that could be overcome. The city of Westminster is to be congratulated warmly on its initiative. On behalf of residents in the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea,

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I can say with certainty that we would welcome similar legislation, whether by way of a private Bill or by national legislation.

8.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): It may be helpful if I give a brief summary of the Government's attitude to the Bill, the main features of which have been so admirably and lucidly described by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler). Subject to certain proposed amendments, to which I will refer shortly, the Government welcome the Bill and hope that it will receive a Second Reading. As has been said so notably by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster North, litter anywhere, especially in our capital city, is an increasing and unsightly characteristic of our streets. It can also constitute a threat to public health.

For that reason the Government have taken or have sponsored a number of policy inititiatives, of which I mention two. We currently allocate some £500,000 a year through the Keep Britain Tidy group to a number of local initiatives undertaken by local authorities, schools and voluntary organisations. In July last year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment launched the United Kingdom 2000 scheme under the chairmanship of Richard Branson. The objective was to increase the quality and quantity of work being done to improve the environment. I am glad to say that over 200 projects have been started involving some 4,200 volunteers. For the current financial year we have increased our funding for this project to around £1·5 million.

It has been asked whether the Government have some national scheme in mind similar or analogous to the scheme proposed in the Bill. We do not have such a general power, nor do we propose to introduce enabling legislation of the sort advocated by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). On the other hand, it is quite clear that if the Bill receives the assent of the House and is put into practice, it will provide an interesting experiment on which we can form a judgment as to the viability of future legislation.

The principal Act is the Litter Act 1983. Hon. Members might like to know that each year about 1,600 successful prosecutions are brought under the 1983 Act and that the average fine currently being imposed is around £32. However, as has been stressed by a number of hon. Members, invoking and enforcing the 1983 Act is a complex and, to be fair, expensive procedure. The Bill is designed to achieve a more effective and simpler method of enforcement.

We support the objectives of the Bill and, subject to certain changes being agreed in Committee, we shall support the passage of the Bill. The changes that we seek have been clearly outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North and I am glad to hear that he and the council agree to them. There are two changes. First, we believe that fines levied under the Bill should go into the Consolidated Fund and not into local authority funds. This represents a long-standing principle which was given statutory force in the Justices of the Peace Act 1949. The principle is that where a local authority levies a fine that money goes not into its own resources but into central Government funds.

There is an important principle which underpins that proposition. It is wrong in principle to allow an authority to enforce a law if it has a pecuniary interest in the manner in which it is enforced or the extent to which it is enforced. For that reason the Government wish to see the Bill amended in the way that I have outlined. If the House gives a Second Reading to the Bill, it will then have the opportunity of considering the Ways and Means resolution proposed in the name of my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. If that is approved, the Committee would have the opportunity to make the amendments that I have described.

The second group of amendments relates to the power of police officers. The Government would be reluctant to see the Bill used as a means of imposing an additional burden on police officers. Those hon. Members who represent the capital well know the burdens that police officers of the Metropolitan force already carry. Therefore, the House will understand my reluctance to see the Bill being a vehicle for additional burdens being imposed on the Metropolitan force. Consequently, the Government would wish to see the Bill amended so as to delete from it those parts of it which empower a police constable to issue a notice. That will require an amendment to clause 4. It will remain possible for a police officer to institute proceedings under the 1983 Act if he thinks that that is appropriate.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister tell the House when the Metropolitan police were first asked their opinion on the provisions in the Bill, unamended, as it is before us tonight, because they should have been consulted at a much earlier stage? In terms of discussions with the police, who took the initiative?

Mr. Hogg: I am sorry that I have to disappoint the hon. Member in that I am not able to give him the answer to the detailed question that he has raised. He should more properly pursue that with the chairman of the Westminster city council.

The second group of amendments I referred to includes clause 9 which, as presently drafted, would impose additional duties on the police service. Clause 9 as drafted makes it an offence for somebody to refuse to give his name and address to an authorised officer of the local authority. We wish to see that provision deleted. If it remains in the Bill, it is bound to result in additional work being imposed upon the police service, which is not something that I wish to see happen.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North has given careful consideration to the changes that the Government wish to see and I know too that he has discussed the Bill with the council. He has indicated that the three changes I have mentioned in the course of my remarks are acceptable both to himself and to the council. I am pleased about that. Subject to that understanding, the Government would wish to see the Bill receive a Second Reading and wish it well in its passage through Parliament.

8.49 pm

Mr. Wheeler: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for what he has said and I again confirm that the proposed amendments to be moved in Committee, which I discussed earlier, will be proceeded with. I am glad that he and I are of one mind on that matter.

Mr. Dubs: Clause 9(2), which I understand will be deleted, says that it will be an offence to refuse to give a name and address. On the assumption that the amendment is incorporated into the Bill, would it be an offence under any other legislation for anybody to give misleading information to one of the officials? In other words, if they give a false name and address, is that an offence?

Mr. Wheeler: I can confirm that Clause 9(2) will be amended in Committee to remove the creation of an offence of failing to give a name and address. I cannot be precise on the other point the hon. Gentleman has raised. It is a matter to be answered in Committee. I hesitate to put myself in the role of the Attorney-General or anyone else, but it has always been my understanding in the enforcement of minor summary offences that it is for the enforcement officer, whoever that may be, to use his or her best endeavours to ascertain a proper name and address for the service of any document or process, be it a fixed ticket or a summons. As I speak I know of no criminal offence that would arise under the criminal law of the realm should a person, whether a citizen of the United Kingdom or of any other country visiting the United Kingdom, give a false name and address. I speak unaided and without the benefit of lawyers.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) quite fairly and properly raised a number of issues about principles. All of us in the House are the guardians of liberty. We are concerned about the interaction between enforcement agencies and citizens using the streets and the public highways wherever that may be, in the city of Westminter or elsewhere. As I said earlier, the city of Westminster proposes to train its staff who will form part of the multi-agency inspectorate. That is a cumbersome title but it is intended to include those officials of the council who are concerned with environmental enforcement, street trading enforcement and other matters for which the council has responsibility in addition to its new role. Those officials will be properly trained in the discharge of that duty. They will, of course, be equipped with proper identification of a sort that will leave the citizen in no doubt as to their status and credibility.

Whether they will wear a uniform is a matter for the council to decide on some future occasion in conjunction with its officials. However, I do not think that that is a matter of great principle.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West referred also to who might be supporting the Bill. I have a copy of a letter from the London Boroughs Association dated 3 February 1987 in which it confirms that it is supporting Westminster city council's endeavours to achieve this legislation. It goes on to say that it has written in appropriate terms to the Home Office and to the LBA's parliamentary panel in the House and in the House of Lords.

I understand that as part of the wide consultative exercise in which Westminster city council engaged it received encouragement, if not support, from the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Southwark, and Camden.

I can put at rest the mind of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West about consultation with the police. He is quite right to raise that matter. I can say that the commissioner of police was consulted at the beginning when the Bill was being proposed by the city council. He and his officers were able to spend some time considering the matter. Indeed, I had a discussion with the deputy assistant commissioner of police responsible for the city of Westminster district and I know that he and others had a most fulsome exchange with officials of Westminster city council and its leader. It is true that the police did have reservations about their involvement in this process. That matter, as the House knows, has been properly dealt with.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether the unions had been consulted at Westminster city council. I can tell him that the offices which form part of the multi-agency inspectorate are fully aware of the measure and have been consulted. As far as I am aware, they, as a group, raised no objection to their involvement in the enforcement of the legislation. I can give an assurance to the hon. Gentleman and the House that, although Westminster city council is a pioneer in the privatisation of its services because it wishes to obtain value for money for its ratepayers and the most effective services, it is not intending to contract out those employees of the council who are involved in the inspectorial duties to do with environmental health, street trading or enforcement of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) welcomed the Bill and I am grateful for his robust support. He understands the problems that large numbers of visitors can cause to an important town that is popular with tourists from both home and overseas.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) was also robust in his support for the Bill. He said that the problem of litter is getting worse and he commended Westminster city council's initiative in bringing this measure before the House. He understood the extent of the difficulty since his own borough is a mecca for visitors and suffers from the problems of litter. I am glad that he was able to give such fulsome support to the measure.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) raised a number of points. He inquired about the measure of support from councils in the country for Westminster city council's proposals. I can tell him from the information given to me that some 112 local authorities expressed support—I use those words carefully—for the measure we are considering. A further 162 local authorities expressed their interest in the proposal. That is a remarkable record of consultation and betokens the energy displayed by the city council in its efforts to attract the widest possible interest in its endeavours.

The hon. Member for Battersea complained about the three amendments to which I referred earlier and said that the House had not received proper notice. But the purpose of consultation, particularly with a measure of this kind, is to ascertain the degree of support that it has, whether from the police, the Home Office or any other interested party, and to listen to representations that are made and amend the Bill accordingly. The council did just that. It should be commended not only for consulting but for heeding the advice that it received.

Mr. Tony Banks: But surely the hon. Gentleman accepts that amendments such as this reveal that Westminster city council did not consult properly before drafting the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Battersea is right. It may not be unprecedented, but it is unusual for a great hole to be kicked in a Bill on Second Reading. This clearly reveals that, for all the hon. Gentleman's loyal protestations, Westminster did not consult as it should have done.

Mr. Wheeler: I reject the hon. Gentleman's assertion that the consultation was ineffective. The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that amendments to Bills arise with remarkable speed and at extraordinary hours of the night, according to the needs and interests of this House and its Members. I do not think there is a great issue of principle here.

Mr. Dubs: I welcome the fact that Westminster council went in for consultation. My complaint is that Westminster council should have given us the Bill when the consultation was complete rather than have presented us with a Bill which, we are told, is defective in a number of respects. That seems to be the wrong way to go about it, and it means that we do not yet have before us a Bill representing Westminster council's intentions.

Mr. Wheeler: Surely it is relatively easy to scan such a short Bill and the amendments. There is no great difficulty here. This is not a Bill of several hundred pages with dozens of clauses but a Bill of two or three pages with only a handful of clauses. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that.

The hon. Member for Battersea went on to ask whether the Bill would work. The litter legislation that the House passed in the 1950s has had a very chequered career as a piece of criminal legislation and has resulted in relatively few prosecutions in England and Wales. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—said, there have been about 1,600 prosecutions a year, which is a very small number. That reflects the difficulty of making the Act work. Westminster city council's proposals offer the reasonable expectation of a more effective form of enforcement. That is welcomed by a number of bodies outside the political machine with an interest in the environment. Therefore —and I believe that many hon. Members agree—it is worth running an experiment in the City of Westminster to see what progress can be made.

The hon. Member for Battersea suggested fairly that the Bill will create different enforcement practices as between one part of London and another as well as between other parts of the United Kingdom, and of course that must be true. However, if Westminster's experiment is found to be successful, no doubt other local authorities —for instance, the borough of Bournemouth—will exert pressure because they will want to try such an experiment in their districts. At that stage, the local authority associations may well persuade the Home Office to introduce enabling legislation to cover the country as a whole.

I am grateful for the encouragement that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) gave in his short and helpful intervention. I know that his local authority will be among those watching Westminster's experiment with great interest. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for his remarks and for his wholehearted support of the Bill, subject to the amendments to be properly moved in Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed.

WAYS AND MEANS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the City of Westminster Bill, it is expedient to authorise payments into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Financial Services

Question again proposed.

9.4 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): We have moved downstream from the city of Westminster to the City of London, where the problems are perhaps graver than those of litter bugs and where there are miscreants on whom we seek to impose more substantial fines and penalties than were the subject of our earlier discussions.

I reiterate my warm welcome for the orders. As I said, this legislation and the delegation order are important in giving to the Securities and Investments Board considerable powers and authority of regulation and investigation in the City. The financial services sector is of pre-eminent importance to the economy, deploying more than 1 million people and contributing more than £7·5 billion in overseas earnings. This legislation, of which the orders are a subsidiary part, is effectively the most comprehensive overhaul of investor protection and legislation for 40 years. The House and the public should be aware of the magnitude of what the Government are doing—for the first time, both establishing and delegating to a body of this importance and stature significant responsibilities in terms of future regulation of the City.

It is appropriate to remind my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State and hon. Members that the principal object of the legislation and of the orders is to enhance investor protection. Our principal concern must be to improve the lot of investors. We are not, I hope, giving powers to a body that will be an apologist for the City or a greaser of wheels. That is not our principal objective, although obviously we hope that this body will not stand in the way of an efficient, profitable and vibrant City, especially the investment industries.

I should like to ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister a number of specific questions which, although I have paid tribute to the legislation, are of some concern. I note from the orders that a number of important powers are being transferred. As I understand it, a number of the powers which were added in Committee to the SIB will be delegated under the order. I am interested in those powers that are not being transferred, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has deemed appropriate to keep unto himself. He is empowered under the relevant section of the Financial Services Act 1986 to delegate to the SIB a wide range of responsibilities. In fact, he has chosen to delegate the majority of those powers, but it appears that some significant ones have not been delegated, and I should like to ask why.

Why, for example, is the power to withdraw authorisation not being delegated to the SIB? It is nonsense that the SIB will be responsible for granting certain businesses authorisation if they seek it from the SIB, but the SIB will not be empowered to take that authorisation away—that power will still be vested in the Secretary of State. The SIB will be responsible for overseeing the self-regulating bodies which, in turn, will grant authorisation through membership to institutions, yet the SIB will not in those instances be able to withdraw authorisation. That is a fairly minimalist approach. Perhaps, if we intend the SIB to be taken seriously in the City, we should have been a bit more courageous in the teeth and the power that we are giving to it.

It seems rather odd that the SIB will not be allowed to make statements on misconduct in the City. Why not? The watchdog body, the SIB, is responsible for ensuring, on a day-to-day basis, that people are conducting good business. If it finds that they are not, that there are misdemeanours or possible criminal activity, why should it be prevented from making statements about that misconduct? I want it to make statements about misconduct, and I want it to be respected and fair. It should be able to say, in the City and publicly, that certain activities are unacceptable and that they need further investigation. It should be able to pin the blame, where it is justified, on certain institutions and persons, be they authorised or not. Why is the power to make statements on misconduct reserved to the Secretary of State? It could have been transferred to the SIB. The Minister has deliberately chosen not to do so.

Why are the powers on injunctions not being transferred to the SIB? It will be able to investigate, authorise and bar businesses. It will be able to grant authorisation and set up a long and detailed rule book on the way that the City should operate, yet when it discovers that something is going wrong it will not only be unable to withdraw authorisation or make a statement on misconduct, it will be unable to take out an injunction to prevent that misbehaviour. The power to ask a court for an injunction rests and remains with the Secretary of State. That would have been a reasonable power to give to the SIB if we are sufficiently satisfied that it has the personnel, rules, authority and statutory identity to be able to do the job that Parliament is setting for it.

I see why, by way of contrast, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has said that the rules on indemnity should not be transferred to the SIB. It is wholly proper that indemnity from the civil law should not be delegated to any body other than the Government. Rightly, my hon. and learned Friend and the Government have kept that power for the Secretary of State.

In all other respects we are adopting a softly-softly approach, but we could have gone further in giving the SIB the teeth to do the job that we envisage for it.

Those matters relate to the powers that will not be transferred. I ask my hon. and learned Friend why some of the powers that will be transferred are to be exercised concurrently with the Secretary of State. In other words, the order is saying that some of the orders that the Government give or delegate to the SIB are powers that both the Secretary of State and the SIB will be able to exercise. Why is it necessary to have a concurrent exercise of power for injunctions against unauthorised people? It is strange that under the proposed order the SIB will not be able to take out an injunction to stop an authorised institution doing something but it will be able to take out an injunction against unauthorised people doing something that they should not. It seems an arbitrary and questionable decision to provide a distinction in this case. The SIB should have the power of injunction in authorised and unauthorised cases. I do not see why, in the case of unauthorised concerns, it has been deemed permissible to give that power concurrently to the SIB yet not in the case of authorised businesses.

I turn to the delegation of investigations. It is proposed that the power to investigate certain misconduct will be exercised by the SIB. In Committee that power was envisaged and extended. The SIB will be able to exercise that power currently with the Secretary of State.

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

Who is to take the lead? Where will the responsibility lie, in certain instances, to investigate suspicious cases? Will certain activities be the responsibility of the Department and others the responsibility of the SIB? Will it be the body to which the complaint is made in the first instance that will take up an investigation?

At some stage, we shall need some rather clearer guidelines if there are not to be gaps in or, conversely, overlapping of responsibility and an explanation of why such a concurrent exercise of power is deemed to be necessary.

The SIB will take on significant powers. I have three points of advice. First, I urge it to think ahead and not respond only to past events when framing its rules or making any statements on matters concerning investor protection and the running of investor markets. Secondly, I advise it not to be nobbled. It is easy to be nobbled in the City. The City and many investment institutions have a way of making people who are not part of its inner circle believe that they do not understand the principles or mechanics of their operation. In fact, the City is by no means invulnerable—nor should it be invulnerable—to questioning and supervision. I hope that the SIB will continue to have the independence and authority that it has already demonstrated and will not move into the cosy club of the City and be nobbled by City opinion and City experience.

Thirdly, the SIB must remember who sent it there. Parliament did. It is not the creature of the City, set up either to preserve a closed shop or to establish the smooth running of the City. It is there principally to do the job of investor protection. In my judgment, the relationship between the SIB, SROs and the many institutions under them should be slightly uncomfortable at all times. They should not get on too easily and too well. They should be slightly fearful and respectful. In striking the right balance between co-operation, in which the SIB must engage, and the vigorous pursuit of control and supervision, they should err on the side of recognising the principle of investor protection as paramount.

For those reasons, the debate and the orders are important. The orders are the culmination of a trilogy of important pieces of legislation that not only will transform the regulation of the City but will create a more vibrant, profitable and respectable City whose integrity and profitability will earn the respect of the world.

9.17 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I declare an interest as the non-executive chairman of Fraser Green Ltd, a firm of investment managers who are licensed dealers and who have applied for membership of the Investment Managers Regulatory Organisation. I also help to run courses teaching members of the Financial Intermediaries and Managers Brokers Regulatory Association their rules. I assure the House that it is in nobody's interest to make sure that the rules are difficult so that as many people as possible come to me for guidance. It is in everybody's interest that the rules are workable, that they are able to be understood by people in the investment world and that they are flexible enough to deal with changes as they occur.

As Professor Jim Gower said, the most important point of the rules is that FIMBRA members should be able to carry them out. If the retail end of the market cannot accept the rules and finds that it cannot work to them, the whole edifice will come crashing down. The framework that is set out in the Financial Services Act 1986 is the right set of rules to give the best possible chance to all those involved in investment business to carry out their operations and, at the same time, to give the best chance of effective investor protection.

I welcome the order and pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. When he took on his onerous task, he little saw the difficulties with the legislation that lay ahead. I would not mind betting that, had he seen the rocky road in front of him, he would have considered rejecting his position. He has gained the admiration and respect of those in the City and of hon. Members for the way in which he tackled the legislation.

I must also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). His speech was typical of the care and consideration that he has given to the legislation throughout its progress. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister would agree that my hon. Friends the Members for Chichester and for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) — it is invidious to choose but two — made such constructive contributions in Committee that, through their own power of persuasion and depth of knowledge, they improved a Bill that has since become a workable, practical Act.

Some unavoidable problems still remain. The bulk of the SIB's rules, for example, is unavoidable. Anyone confronted with that draft set of rules would be daunted by the task of reading through them—yet many people will have to do that if they are to adhhere to the rules properly. The legalistic language in the rules is extremely difficult, and it would be better if it were not quite so complicated. However, I see no alternative to the way in which the rules have been drafted. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister said, they are merely the codification of best practice. They are not a couple of hundred pages of legislation or brand new rules to which people must adhere, but a catalogue of what they should be doing already, coupled with some extra requirements to ensure that they fit into the self-regulatory framework.

Other remaining, unavoidable problems are the complicated formulae that are to be found from time to time in the rules, and the procedures through which many people will have to go. Some of the remaining problems are regrettable; happily, they are open to review in the future. One of them is the abolition of the requirement for professional indemnity insurance. I understand why that has been removed and many small businesses will be happy that that requirement has gone, because it reduces an extra cost for smaller businesses. I fully recognise that it has been replaced by the compensation scheme, which I believe is one of the most hopeful aspects of the legislation. It represents genuine investor protection. The fact that an investor is guaranteed his losses up to £48,000 out of £50,000 is a comfort that many investors wish had existed in the past.

I regret the fact that the registration of individuals under the SIB's draft rules will not extend to those who deal with the public but do not have management authority. The registration of individuals, which is limited to principals, directors and partners, has not gone far enough. Many people deal directly with the public and they, too, should be registered and their qualifications for doing their jobs should be open to scrutiny.

There could be stronger inspection and suspension regulations in cases in which those who inspect the finances of an organisation are not yet satisfied. I further regret the fact that foreign-owned branches are still not being properly controlled. They could still avoid full scrutiny. They should be required to deposit an amount equal to that required in the financial resource rules with a bank in the United Kingdom to make sure that there is no possibility of their failing to meet the requirements that they would have to meet were they part of a wholly United Kingdom group. However, I am sure that experience during the months and years ahead will show whether the rules must be tightened in that regard.

I also regret that cold calling is still allowed in its present form and has been extended in some respects. I do not like cold calling when it is practised on me. It is an extremely annoying intrusion, especially when done by telephone. However, it is a well-established principle. Those in the investment industry who use cold calling have persuaded my hon. and learned Friend that the practice is necessary and not especially harmful and that through its use many who would not have been able to benefit from investment and savings have been able to enjoy the advantages of so doing. Therefore, I can understand why the rules are as they are. Against this background, I hope that there will be regular scrutiny of the experience of investors, of the industry and of the public generally over the months and years ahead. If rules need to be tightened, I hope that the process will be put in hand quickly and effectively. When a new form of investment is created or when a new investment practice is conceived, I hope that the changes that flow from these developments will be carried out quickly and effectively so that loopholes are not allowed to continue for too long.

There are certain regulations that I consider to be too harsh. I understand, however, that it is extremely difficult to get anything right in legislation of the sort that we are considering. It is clear that one is open to subjective judgment.

Many small firms may find themselves defined as category 4 firms and therefore required to produce a minimum liquidity requirement that is more suited to that of a larger stockbroking firm. This will be unfortunate, but I am sure that the problem can be dealt with in time.

I welcome the strong stand on polarisation that has been taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and by my hon. and learned Friend. I would hate the message to go from the Chamber to the other place that we do not feel firmly and strongly that we are introducing investor protection and not investment business protection. That is the basic principle and the pivot of the Act. We believe that the public should know with whom they are dealing and what they are buying. They should understand what they will get for their money and the risks that are involved in getting it, and any confusion of these principles must be eradicated by this measure. Many hon. Members have supported the principle of polarisation even though they have been subject to extremely strong lobbying and even though the basic Conservative philosophy would be to leave that which has been successful and which has not been proved to be abusive to continue as it is. In this instance we can see that the public need to be protected, and I am pleased that the banks in different ways are adjusting to their task. I do not see the likelihood of a strong battle for polarisation to be reversed, and I hope that wisdom will prevail in another place. I am sure that it will.

The message from this Chamber is that what has been achieved on polarisation is for the benefit of the general public. It is not every piece of legislation that is so clear in its objectives.

I welcome also the reduced costs for small firms. The Act was not intended to drum out of business the sole trader, and that should not have been its objective. That would have been anti-competitive and grossly unfair. It does not follow that a person who happens to work in a large firm is competent and that someone who works for himself is incompetent. However, if small traders in the investment world do not have the resources that are necessary to carry on with their business, they should not be in business. It is strange that many stockbrokers carp at the amount of capital that they are required to have to survive, yet would never consider the flotation of shares in another business unless it were vastly bigger. Businesses must have sufficient capital to be able to survive and sufficient liquidity and solvency to enable them to carry out their work effectively.

On the other hand, there is no need for unnecessary costs that lead successful individuals towards insolvency. The reduction of costs that we have seen during the formulation of the draft rules by the SIB, the reduction of costs for those not handling clients' money and the withdrawing of the insistence on professional indemnity — although I hope that many firms will take that up voluntarily — is a constructive step in helping small businesses.

When Opposition Members read the report of this debate in *Hansard*—they are certainly not here to listen to it — I hope that they will understand that we have arrived at the right framework for investment protection. The Securities Exchange Commission in America has said repeatedly that if it were to begin again it would choose the framework which my hon. and learned Friend has ferried so successfully through Parliament, in a measure that has been amended as a result of detailed consideration and consultation with all interested parties and right hon. and hon. Members. This is exactly the right framework, as it produces effective and qualified people to regulate those in investment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have given the hon. Gentleman much licence because of the technical nature of the matters with which we are dealing, but I remind him that we are not dealing with a Bill or an Act. We are dealing with a very limited order, which seems to have little to do with the point he is raising.

Mr. Hanley: I am most grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I may continue with my conclusion, I hope that you will forgive me for the enthusiasm of my speech because I have been unable before now to speak at length on this matter.

Given the powers which have been granted to the SIB, and the fact that a child has now been born, I congratulate all of those concerned and say that this is the right framework. I am merely responding to points made by Opposition Members earlier. As long as this framework is shown to be flexible, it will serve extremely well not only the nation but those in the investment world.

9.31 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Like all my hon. Friends, I welcome this delegation order. I wish the greatest of good fortune to the SIB in the marathon task it has been given by this legislation. I utter the tiniest word of caution, following what was said earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who requested the Minister to—if I can paraphrase him—hasten slowly on the basis that we had better get it right rather than get it fast. It is difficult to disagree with that sentiment, but I remind the Minister that we are substantially behind the timetable upon which we embarked after the Second Reading of the Bill some 18 months ago when, although no specific date was given, the hope was expressed that it would be operational by the middle of 1987. That cannot now be the case.

While I endorse the statement that we have to get it right, I hope the Minister will take on board that with the acceptance of this delegation order there should be a continuing sense of urgency. I put it no stronger than that. The rules of the SIB, which are now available to us, are opaque and complicated, but it is little short of a miracle that we have been able to produce in a relatively short time rules which had to be started from scratch. The rules are changed slightly from those proposed originally. Whether the Financil Services Act is seen as a protection for the investing public or a vehicle for regulating practitioners, there can be no question that the rules of the SIB are the test of the effectiveness of the new system.

For that reason I express some concern that professional indemnity cover—a point referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley)—is no longer a requirement under the SIB rules. I have long taken the view that the existence of professional indemnity is of benefit to both the public and the intermediaries. I feel a sense of loss that this requirement is no longer part of the SIB rules.

I recognise that professional indemnity cover must be paid for and some intermediaries will shed few tears over the fact that they are no longer required to effect it. But that is a rather short-sighted view. Here I should declare an interest, which I have declared on the many occasions that I have addressed the House on this subject, in that I am parliamentary adviser to the British Insurance Brokers Association, a trade association of some 4,000 member firms, of which approximately 3,000 could be categorised as small brokers. Yet there is no doubt that the BIBA is full of regret that the previous requirement for professional indemnity cover is no longer part of the SIB rules.

Some people will say that the compensation fund is sufficient. But I would venture to question whether that is so. Let me pursue separately the two points of the cost to small intermediaries, in particular, and the fact that having a compensation fund makes it less necessary for us to have professional indemnity cover as a requirement.

Many small intermediaries will contend that professional indemnity cover will be too costly at a time when many people are calling, successfully, it would seem, for a reduction in the costs to the small intermediary in particular. That overlooks the fact that the existence of a professional indemnity policy can sometimes represent the difference between a company staying in business and being sued out of existence. There may well be a powerful argument, particularly for small intermediaries, for requiring professional indemnity cover.

From the investor's point of view, even if the company with which the investor entrusts his savings were to act fraudulently, professional indemnity underwriters have shown over the years that they will pay up in such circumstances, enabling——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I may not fully understand these matters, but I find it difficult to understand what this has to do with the delegation of the Secretary of State's responsibilities to this new body. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell me to which part of the orders his remarks relate.

Mr. McCrindle: If you are telling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is out of order to refer to the SIB rule book, which is part and parcel of the Secretary of State's decision to introduce the order, clearly I have wasted my time in waiting for the past four hours to be called. However, I respectfully suggest that that delegation——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am at the hon. Gentleman's feet in these matters. If he honestly assures me that these are relevant matters, I shall accept his word.

Mr. McCrindle: My powers of persuasion are clearly greater than I had expected. I was ready to make the case more extensively, but the fact that I am now permitted to continue will enable me, to your pleasure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to that of the House, to restrict my remarks to a shorter period than might have seemed necessary a few moments ago.

In the event of a professional indemnity policy being in existence, even if there is an element of fraud, underwriters have shown over the years that they will pay up, thereby enabling the excess above the compensation fund limit to be recovered. That is clearly in the interests of investor protection.

That brings me in turn to the compensation fund, which, again, is very much part of the rule book to which I have taken the liberty to refer. I welcome the existence of a compensation fund, but £48,000, although it sounds a good deal, is not a vast sum in 1987. Besides, if there is no professional indemnity protection, more claims are likely to be lodged against that compensation fund.

If my prediction in that respect is correct, this welcome compensation fund may soon come under some strain. I do not know why, if professional indemnity were thought necessary by the SIB before, it is not considered necessary now. I cannot understand why all mention of it is now absent and I cannot understand what has changed to persuade the SIB that it is no longer necessary.

But again, thinking in terms of the SIB rule book and the effect that that would have on not only that institution but the self-regulatory organisations to which the Minister referred, if the SIB intimates that it no longer requires professional indemnity insurance, it follows that it will be acutely difficult for any of the SROs to require professional indemnity cover under their rules.

FIMBRA, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) referred, clearly intended, and still intends, to require professional indemnity to be affected, but there is no way that I can see that that requirement could be maintained if the SIB withdrew from its earlier suggestion that it should be effected.

Let me point out to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister the effect on the Insurance Brokers Registration Council, a body that arguably runs in parallel in investor protection with the SIB. Since 1980, professional indemnity cover has been required before an intermediary can register as an insurance broker under the legislation. Part of the requirement to enable an intermediary to do so is the possession of a professional indemnity policy. If the SIB drops the requirement, what will be the effect? I venture to suggest that a great many companies involved in non-life assurance business would be inclined to deregister. What price consumer protection then?

Let me try to summarise the case. In my view, professional indemnity insurance has, and must have, a place in any total regulatory regime. As with the Insurance Brokers Registration Council, it must be viewed in conjuction with capital adequacy rules and a compensation fund. Without a professional indemnity requirement, a gap, through which consumer protection may be lost, still exists.

I accept that professional indemnity insurance has a cost attached to it. However, I would argue that the cost is borne by the firm of intermediaries, and will bear a direct relation to the claims record of that firm. I raise that point to underline that, if there is no record of fraud or negligence, the cost in many cases will be quite reasonable. That compares equitably with the proposed compensation fund, where the cost will be borne by every firm other than the one that has caused the problem. Secondly, the amount of contribution to a compensation fund required, and thus the costs incurred, will increase if PI insurance is not required, and the cost of PI may therefore not outweigh the increased cost of contribution to a compensation fund.

I apologise for having concentrated almost exclusively on what may seem to many to be a narrow point. I hope that, if I have done nothing else, I have at least underlined to the House the importance that I attach to it, as do a great many other people. I hope that a message will go out from the House that, while welcoming the SIB, supporting the delegation order and wishing that body the best of good fortune, we feel that there would be some advantage in reconsidering its decision to drop its previous requirement that PI cover should be effected.

9.42 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): When we started out on the Financial Services Bill, I think that all of us on the Standing Committee, whatever our party, had certain specific objectives. One was to ensure, first and foremost, that investors were properly protected. The second was to establish a fair market in which there was a level playing field, and in which all the players were at least as equal as we could make them. Our third objective was that regulation should be achieved at reasonable cost, and that it should be flexible in itself. Our final objective was that any form of regulation that we proposed should not impede the proper development of the market, and its future expansion for the prosperity of the nation as a whole.

However, we perhaps little realised when we embarked upon the legislation the extraordinary pressures that would be brought to bear on us from all sectors and all sides of the market, and the learning process that many of us would have to go through. I pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for having achieved these objectives and for the extraordinarily flexible way in which he has dealt with the problems. We are all greatly in his debt regarding the activities to date of the Securities and Investments Board.

As for flexibility, it is essential that the market should be allowed to develop new products and to deal with new products. It would be tragic if today we created a precedent that set the SIB rules in tablets of stone for all time. That is not our intention, nor is it the intention of the SIB. It is important that the message should go out that all hon. Members regard the development of a prosperous and thriving market as vital and that it should be possible to incorporate future developments.

I am particularly interested in the development of a unitised property market. I hope that it will be possible to accommodate it within the SIB rules and that nothing we do today will impede the development of that or similar markets.

As for the level playing field, it is vital that either old or new products should not have an unfair advantage over other products. Both the current and future regulations should be as fair as possible to companies that offer different products. We have gone a long way down that road. It has been a difficult process and there has been a good deal of controversy. I am not convinced that we have gone as far as we could over the disclosure of expenses on with-profits policies. I understand the difficulties, but I hope that the SIB and the Department will continue to think about the problem and that they will introduce practical proposals.

On cost, I am pleased that it has been possible to reduce the cost of regulation for smaller firms. In the early days of the legislation there were many scare stories in the popular press and in the financial press about cost. It was feared that smaller firms would be driven out of business. Very few people now think that that is so, even though the costs are so high.

One hopes that it will be possible to reduce the costs even further. Nevertheless, there have been developments in the market, and some of the larger elements in the industry have supported some of the smaller elements. I hope that that process will continue so that the establishment of small firms is not inhibited. They can contribute to variety in the market and to the range of advice that can be given to potential investors.

Furthermore, the SIB must be seen to be fair. It must clamp down on abuses, wherever they arise. It is no use passing legislation if people are able to get away with practices that all of us would regard as reprehensible. There has been quite a lot of that in the recent past. We hope that it will not arise in the future.

We should all support the actions of the SIB and the SROs in policing this legislation. I hope that none of us will be backward in supporting those actions as and when necessary. I have been pleased to see the firm line that the SIB has taken on polarisation. That was the first big test of the resolve of the SIB and of this House in the face of immense pressure from the big battalions of the banks and building societies, who wanted to be a case apart.

The banks said that the friendly neighbourhood bank manger was able to speak to his clients quite differently from the way sharp insurance salemen would talk to their so-called clients. The banks are thrusting, aggressive commercial organisations and are quite different from the friendly old banks that we were used to in the past, and the new market players are also quite different.

[Mr. John Butterfill]

Today's bank managers are motivated to achieve results for a financial conglomorate. Sadly but truly, they cannot be relied upon to be totally impartial because the pressures on them are far too great. It is right that they should be subject to exactly the same rules as everybody else in this market. There can be no exceptions. They must decide whether they can give impartial advice to the public or sell their own products. The two are not compatible and cannot be conjoined.

The message should go out from this place to another place and elsewhere that we will not be moved. Despite all the insinuations that we will be moved, polarisation is an essential part of these proposals and cannot be removed without destroying the legislation that we have strived so hard to put into place.

9.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): This has been a most interesting debate, characterised by thoughtful and constructive contributions from my hon. Friends which has marked this legislation from the outset. I say that not in any sense of undue controversy in relation to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I am grateful for the kind remarks of my hon. Friends, and I pay tribute to the part played by my hon. Friends in Committee in the formulation of this legislation.

The hon. Member for Livingston suggested that if we were starting again we would do it differently. I reject that assertion unhesitatingly and unqualifiedly. That suggestion springs from a profoundly mistaken view which the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends have held, or pretended to hold, about the legislation from its commencement — that it is a soft option or halfway house between statutory regulation, which they purport to see as tough and fierce, and unmitagated self-regulation, which they rightly see as being more of an easy option.

This legislation was not put on the statute book as an easy or soft option. It was formulated in the way in which it was because it represents the most effective way of regulating financial markets, and it incorporates a flexibility and an ability to respond quickly to developments in the market place which a fully statutory system would not have done.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Is the Minister saying that, if he could transport himself back two years and drafted the Bill afresh, he would still say nothing in that Bill about the Takeover Panel?

Mr. Howard: Unhesitatingly. The Takeover Panel is under review. We may before too long learn more about improvements which can be made in the operation of the Takeover Panel. But it by no means follows that taking a statutory approach necessarily improves the way in which the provisions regulate the markets with which they are concerned.

The other point about the hon. Gentleman's speech which ties in with this relates to resources. He talked about the resources which are available to the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States. The SEC has been bedevilled by endemic complaints of lack of resources. Only recently its chairman asked for an increase of a third in his budget. It is absurd to suggest that putting such a body in the public sector would assist in making resources available for it to do its job properly. It is another of the fundamental misapprehensions which Opposition Members have had about the legislation from the outset.

Mr. McCrindle: Does not my hon. and learned Friend also agree that the point the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was making was that more resources will find more fraud? In fact, in the Boesky case it was a tip-off to Merrill Lynch that brought about the disclosures. No amount of money in the SEC would have opened up that can of worms.

Mr. Howard: I prefer not to comment on individual cases, tempting though it is, but the point underlying my hon. Friend's intervention is undoubtedly valid.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) urged caution about the timetable and raised issues which he said are not yet fully resolved. In answering him, I would very much pray in aid the observations of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), who rightly pointed to the need to get the system in being as soon as we can. I am not sure that there has been a slippage. I think the phrase we used when the legislation was under consideration was that we hoped to get the system in place in the second half of this year. We now say by the end of the year; that comes within the second half of the year. I hope that the main provisions will be in place by then.

We must be on our guard against falling into the trap of allowing the best to become the enemy of the good. It is important that the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley should be resolved, and I am confident that they will be. We must try to get them right. But ordinary savers and ordinary investors should have the right to compensation if they lose money because of someone's misconduct, and they should have that right as soon as possible. That is an important factor to be borne in mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) raised several points springing from the deep concern which he has displayed on the legislation from the outset and from the important part which he has played in shaping it. He asked why a number of functions have not been transferred. I hesitate to say this, but there may have been a tinge of misunderstanding at the bottom of the points which he raised because the powers to which he referred will be transferred in nearly all cases.

The limitations on their transfer are narrow and somewhat technical. For example, the power to withdraw the authorisation to which he referred is reserved to the Secretary of State only when the grounds for doing so are a contravention of a reciprocity notice issued by the Secretary of State. The power to issue reprimands is reserved only when misconduct relates to business at Lloyd's because of the separate arrangements being made for regulating Lloyd's. The power to seek injunctions is reserved only when the contravention in question is a contravention of the provisions on the promotion of foreign insurance contracts. I hope that those observations will reassure my hon. Friend about the concern which he expressed.

My hon. Friend also asked why some matters were still concurrent in relation to the SIB and the Secretary of State. That is of importance in the early stages of the system while the SIB begins the task of exercising its

powers, and not necessarily something which is to be regarded as a permanent feature of the system. We do not anticipate that it will lead to problems about who should take the lead in the specific difficulties to which my hon. Friend referred. There will be close co-operation between the Secretary of State and the SIB on these matters, and I suspect that in practice it will largely depend on to whom the information leading to the action is given. I do not expect this to give rise to any difficulty.

I hope also that, in the light of what I have said, my hon. Friend will acquit us of any half-heartedness in our desire to see the SIB playing its prominent role with the full force and powers which all of us who have been concerned with this legislation have always had in mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes made a number of points. He referred to foreign-owned businesses. They will of course be subject to the rules, including the financial resources rules, and in appropriate cases where it is necessary to protect investors the SIB will be able to require a business to keep assets in the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend raised a number of other points on the rules, some of which he said were too harsh and some not harsh enough. One of the great advantages of the system, largely missed by those who keep talking about some other ill-defined system, is that it will have the ability to change its rules with a minimum of legislative formality so long as they comply with the provisions of the statute. The rules are not writ in stone but will develop with time, and I am sure that points such as those raised by my hon. Friend will be taken into account by the SIB when it reviews the matter, as it inevitably will.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar, in particular, referred to the lack of a requirement that there should be indemnity cover. I understand the point my hon. Friend made, but he will, particularly in view of his own experience and intimate knowledge of the industry, understand the importance of balancing against those requirements the need to limit costs. If one takes into account the compensation fund which will be available, it is difficult to find serious fault with the reasoning process which led the SIB to come to the conclusion which it did. Again, this is not necessarily a matter which is writ in stone; it is a matter in relation to which it is possible for the system to develop. But one can readily see the reasoning process which led the SIB to its conclusion.

My hon. Friend the Member Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) pursued some matters which he originally raised in Standing Committee. He played his part in ensuring that some of those concerns were fully taken into account in the rules and in the process of evolution. I am sure that he will welcome the study that has been set up by the SIB into the degree of information which can be made available, in particular in relation to endowment insurance policies.

I have already emphasised that these orders are but one step in the process of implementing the framework envisaged by the Financial Services Act 1986. Once the orders are approved and made, the way will be clear for the SIB to recognise self-regulating organisations — assuming of course that they meet the criteria set down in the Act. Those recognised SROs will then need to consider the applications of thousands of businessess, which will be seeking authorisation. The SIB, for its part, will need to process applications for direct authorisation.

Both the SIB and the SROs will be building up their staffs to cope with the requirements of day-to-day regulation. This cannot be done overnight. Indeed, it would be idle to suppose that an entirely new system of regulation which was both effective and balanced could be introduced with the stroke of a pen. But I have no doubt that all these matters will be resolved as quickly as possible. Investors have a right to expect an adequate level of protection. That is why we passed the Financial Services Act. Investors naturally wish the Act's provisions to be introduced as quickly as possible. That is why we have forged ahead with these orders. The SIB has shown itself alive to the requirements of the new requirements of the new system and determined that the United Kingdom will be, and will be seen to be, a "clean" place in which to do investment business. That is why I ask the House to approve the draft orders.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Financial Services Act 1986 (Delegation) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 22nd April 1987, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Finacial Services (Transfer of Functions Relating to Friendly Societies) Order (Northern Ireland) 1987, which was laid before this House on 22nd April, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Financial Services (Transfer of Functions Relating to Friendly Societies) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 22nd April, be approved. — *[Mr. Howard.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c).

Atomic Energy and Radioactive Substances

That the draft British Nuclear Fuels plc (Financial Limit) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 23rd April, be approved.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Question agreed to.

TERRITORIAL SEA BILL [LORDS]

Ordered,

That Standing Committee F be discharged from considering the Territorial Sea Bill [*Lords*] and that the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Committee tomorrow.

PETITION

South Park Primary School, Ilford

10.5 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): It is my honour to present a petition that includes over 400 names of parents of pupils at the South Park primary school, Ilford.

The Petition showeth

That their children are at risk by virtue of their inability to cross the road outside the school without having to move between parked motor vehicles, in that the zig-zag, no parking, school lines are advisory and not mandatory.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Government to make the said signs mandatory as soon as possible.

It is a special pleasure to present this petition, not only because the school is an excellent one with a splendid headmaster, Mr. Drew, and a dedicated staff, but because it is where I started my full-time education. The petitioners hope that the Government will take note of the petition for the benefit of pupils in schools throughout the country. I am indebted to Mrs. Janet Smyth of Tavistock gardens, Mr. David Peacock of Brixham gardens and Mrs. Jean Jones of Breamore road, Seven Kings, for their splendid efforts in bringing forward this petition, of which I hope the Government will take due note.

To lie upon the Table.

Mentally Handicapped Persons (Mid-Kent)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

10.6 pm

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): In recent years there has been a great movement endeavouring to get people with mental disabilities out of the Victorian institutions in which they have been incarcerated back into the community, or, in the case of some older people, into the community for the first time. They may have been incarcerated in those large Victorian asylums for their entire lives. Those asylums are all over the country and are being closed. They seem ghastly and grim to ordinary people. Therefore, those closures are generally welcome. But we must remember that much good and dedicated work has been done in those places over the years and, in looking forward to their closure, we must not forget their past good work.

Tonight I want to talk about Leybourne Grange in Mid-Kent, whose position is completely different, as it is not a great Victorian monstrosity. The hospital is based in a house that was given in the 1930s by its owner for the welfare of those with mental disabilities. Some 27 houses and bungalows have been built since then in the extremely pleasant grounds of about 150 acres. It has farm, horticultural, workshop and other training facilities, including a school which is widely used by those with mentally disabled people from outside the hospital area.

Leybourne has been the happy home for many children, many of them well advanced in life. This excellent establishment was formerly run by the Kent county council and since reorganisation by the Department of Health and Social Security. It has a capacity for some 1,500 patients, of which only some 600 places are currently being used because of the rundown. Leybourne is now threatened with closure. I received a courteous and helpful letter from the chairman of the Tunbridge Wells health authority which administers it. It is curious that the hospital is not within the Tunbridge Wells health authority area. It is an offshore hospital, for want of a better description. Therefore, perhaps the health authority does not have quite the affection for it that we have in my part of Kent. It is not in my constituency but a few hundred yards outside. However, the whole of Mid-Kent is within its catchment area. It is important to my community in Maidstone and it is important to my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) who has spoken to me about this but is, unfortunately, unable to be with us.

With the threatened closure, parents and families of the patients—some of the parents are dead—are concerned for the future. Leybourne Grange has attracted great loyalty from the parents and many of them have urged me to sign early-day motions 424 and 425, which to date have 113 and 109 signatures respectively. I do not hold early-day motions in high esteem; they are a pretty useless part of our procedure. However, the fact that those two have achieved such a high number of signatures shows the genuine anxiety that there is on both sides of the House about the sweeping move to change the system without going into greater depth about the needs of the patients. I think that it is well worth my right hon. Friend the Minister considering those early-day motions.

My purpose in raising this with my right hon. Friend is to re-examine the working of the policy of care in the community. I have seen for myself some of the excellent work being done by the Maidstone district health authority in placing patients in the community. In general, I am a supporter of the principles outlined in Cmnd. 4683 about community care. However, its ideals are not suitable for each and every case.

We know that the system has worked well for many years in Holland, but there have been disastrous results when this sort of system has been applied in the United States and Italy. One must also remember the unhappy attitude of the property owners in properties adjacent to those where the health authority seeks to set up small homes. It is the awful "not near me" syndrome which is all too prevalent. That point is made strongly in the excellent notes that have been produced by the parents of the Leybourne Grange patients.

In one village in my constituency there are several residents clamouring about the fact that people from institutions should not be put near them. Yet, there are parents of a Leybourne child living a few houses away who are most anxious that their child should stay in Leybourne. Therefore, it seems that there is a great contradiction and muddle in the thinking of ordinary members in the community.

I want to urge my right hon. Friend to consider the fact that, if Leybourne is to be closed, the needs of each patient should be considered individually, carefully and fully. Those who can benefit from a return to the community should be so returned. However, let there be a modern pleasant alternative, a new Leybourne, for those patients for whom a caring, quality institution is still needed. I believe that that new village community might well be established at the very place where the present hospital is situated. There is no tradition of grimness. Indeed, it is a most excellent place.

I would now like to turn to the notes that have been produced by the parents of the Leybourne children. They make the point that the children are much happier in a stable community, and we all know that. If they are living in Leybourne or in a new Leybourne, rather than being shuffled from small hostel to small hostel, they will be happy. In small units, one is unlikely to achieve the continuity of care that is possible in Leybourne.

I am most concerned, too, that if the children are driven out into the community, the community will be unable to cope. I question whether the county councils' social services — I am talking on a broader national basis, because I believe that Kent county council runs a pretty tight ship and is pretty efficient and very caring—will be able to cope with the extra burden that will be placed upon them. I do not think that they are geared to it at all. I want to draw attention to this as a national problem and I urge my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to get better liaison going between county council social services and the Department of Health and Social Security. After all, if the sites are to be sold—Leybourne is a valuable site — the cash will flow into the Health Service regions rather than into the county councils, which will have to foot the bill for looking after the patients. I fear lest some less caring county council drive some of the patients into bed and breakfast or similar accommodation, which would be deplorable.

I mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Medway because many of her constituents are patients in Leybourne, and she takes a great interest in the well-being of the institution. My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam)—who is unable to be here tonight, for obvious reasons — also shares my concern about the relationship between county councils and the DHSS. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to do something at a national level to put our minds at rest.

As I have said, Leybourne is no Victorian monstrosity. It has always been a centre of caring excellence. The staff have always been superb, and it is not surprising that their morale is temporarily rather low because of the uncertainties that they face. I believe that if we could create a community village on the Leybourne site—if my hon. Friend could persuade the Tunbridge Wells health authority to take that path—we would have many much happier parents and the children in Leybourne and in our part of Kent would continue to be happy. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend for his help tonight.

10.17 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I congratulate—rather more than is the convention—my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) on his success in securing the debate. I know from the correspondence that Health Ministers—not only me but many others before me—have received from him on this subject that it is very close to his heart. He has pursued it on many occasions as a Member of this House.

I join him in recognising the equally active concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner). Both my hon. Friends assiduously pursue the interests of their constituents. Having been Minister with responsibility for the disabled for some time, I also know of the long-standing interest shown by my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) which is well known to the House.

I shall address some of the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone about the implementation of community care policy throughout the country before dealing with Leybourne Grange. I should like to refer in particular to the co-ordination between health authorities and social services departments that is required.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his generally supportive expressions about the generality of community care policy and the objectives that are being pursued. That would put my hon. Friend very much in line with, perhaps not all opinion, but the overwhelming majority of opinion about the way in which these developments have been moving and the way in which the Government have encouraged them to move. I recognise that the co-ordination to which my hon. Friend referred is a vital part of a successful change from institutional care to care in the community and that it has not been achieved to perfection in every part of the country. I share my hon. Friend's view that the Kent health authorities and the Kent social services department generally have a good record in working together in these matters, and I am sure that they are grateful for what my hon. Friend said.

I hope that my hon. Friend recognises that those same flattering observations could be made of numbers of other health authorities and social services departments. I recognise that in some places this co-ordination does not yet work as well as we would like. We are giving it a good deal of attention and have sought to encourage it by

[Mr. Tony Newton]

various changes, including the improvement in the so-called joint finance arrangements, which have been made over the past few years.

The deputy chairman of the NHS management board, Sir Roy Griffiths — my deputy — has been asked to undertake a 12-month review of community care and to advise on options that would contribute to making it more effective, to ensuring that we get value for money from the very large sums that are spent, and to ensuring that the policies are properly targeted and are as effective as they can be. I am sure that he will wish to take account of my hon. Friend's observations when carrying through that work.

The Tunbridge Wells health authority envisages the closure of Leybourne Grange by 1994-95 as local services in the community are fully developed. That was stated in the authority's strategic plan, and that plan is consistent with Government policy. I assure my hon. Friend that the needs of the residents of Leybourne Grange will dictate the time scale for reducing the number of patients and for the eventual planned closure of the hospital. The South East Thames regional health authority has set up a co-ordinating group of health and local authority officers who are drawing together all the district plans for the placement in the community of their residents at the hospital. That co-ordinating group is also establishing service development policies, personnel policies and resettlement policies relating to the hospital and drawing on the wealth of experience gained by a similar group which planned the community care of patients who were at the Darenth Park hospital, with which my hon. Friend will be familiar.

Administrative systems such as those to which I have referred are necessary to achieve effective co-ordination, but we fully recognise that, however much co-ordination there is, there can be legitimate concerns in the minds of the families of mentally handicapped people when the possibility arises of their son, daughter or relative transferring from a hospital, which may have been his or her home for many years, to the community. I am conscious that, because of some of those concerns, the Save Leybourne Grange Association has been campaigning against the planned closure of the hospital.

I am glad to say that the chairman of the Tunbridge Wells health authority and its general manager have met the association's chairman to discuss its concerns. I emphasise that, in the Government's policy and in my personal view, no one should be discharged without the prior development of community-based services and careful consideration of the future needs of each individual. In general in mid-Kent the health authorities and Kent social services department have been working together closely and effectively to develop a range of community provision for mentally handicapped people. I shall give one or two instances.

The Medway health authority and local social services operate a community living project using premises at Leybourne Grange to prepare individual residents to make the transition between an institutionalised model of care and the community model of care that the project provides in its staffed houses. So far that project has resettled 32 residents from Leybourne Grange into the community and it plans to resettle a further 20 people each year.

Maidstone health authority, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone paid tribute, in which I would wish to join, and the local social services run the Maidstone community care project. That has resettled into the community 39 residents from Lenham hospital which, as my hon. Friend will be aware, is another hospital for mentally handicapped people in Mid-Kent, and the authority plans to resettle a further 36 people. It hopes to resettle successfully into the community 75 residents of Leybourne Grange between 1987 and 1991. I am glad to say that the build-up of community services also involves, and it is important that it should, the voluntary organisations. In Maidstone, for example, MENCAP is actively involved in consultation and joint development plans for setting up a health authority project for mentally handicapped people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and I have mentioned the need to give careful consideration to the future of each resident. That should involve not only the professionals who are responsible for the individual's care but also the parents and the mentally handicapped person wherever possible. Individual assesments are essential— I want to underline this again — because of the individual's specific needs, the wide range and type of community provision, the experience of professional staff and the views and needs of close relatives. All those matters need to be taken into account. I am glad to say that we have been assured that that careful and individual consideration will continue to take place before any resident is discharged from Leybourne Grange hospital.

I understand that the Save Leybourne Grange Association has recently suggested to the South-East Thames health authority that the hospital should be retained to provide a more local service to mentally handicapped people from Maidstone and the Medway towns only, rather than as at present to all health districts in Kent. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone made a suggestion which I understand is associated quite closely with that thought. That is primarily something to be considered by the health authorities concerned, since they have the statutory responsibility for the provision of services. I understand that the association can expect a reply on its suggestions shortly. I will undertake to ask that the health authorities' attention should be drawn to the remarks that my hon. Friend has made so that they can be taken into account in its considerations.

My hon. Friend mentioned staff. I would wish to echo what he said about the tremendous work that we can all too easily forget has been done by the staff of these large residential institutions over the years in caring for the people in their charge. The change of policy is no criticism of the efforts that so many of them have made to providing care, but rather a change in the perception of how the care should be provided in the long-term interests of the patients.

It is important that we should have in mind the needs and interests of the staff when we are making these changes. I know that, with regard to Leybourne Grange, a co-ordinated personnel policy is being worked out which will give staff full opportunities for employment in those districts which are receiving patients. That will include the early interview of staff and, in some cases, protection of salary and conditions of service. The personnel policies will be based on those that were introduced and are successively operating for staff at Darenth Park hospital.

I hope that in some of what I have said tonight I have been able to reflect, if not allay, the concerns that my hon. Friend expressed and to show that I agree with him on the essential need for individual assessment and the importance of improving co-ordination between the different authorities involved in those areas where it does not work as well as I am glad to say it does in Kent.

I hope that I have said enough to make it clear that the move to community care is not, in any sense, a careless or thoughtless policy. It is a policy that needs the careful planning that has been mentioned time and again in the course of this short debate; and it needs the individual assessment that I have emphasised.

When concerns of this kind are expressed, I never tire of saying to people that we do not regard community care as a cheap option. We do not want to hear it described —let alone describe it ourselves—in terms of decanting people from old institutions into some new environment. In the long run, it is a better way of providing individual care for people who need the care of the community, because we believe that that can best be provided in the community. I am certain that the policy, if properly implemented as we want it to be, will be better for many of what is becoming an earlier generation, who have spent too long in the older institutions. It is certain that it could, should and will provide in due course a much better future for new generations of people who may need our help than could have been provided in the past.

The task is a difficult one, not yet always achieved with perfection, but I hope that, through my hon. Friend's speech and his dedicated work for this cause, we have the opportunity to contribute to ensuring that in future progress is even better than it has been in the past.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 May 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Rates (Ealing)

9.34 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I beg to ask leave to present a petition to

The honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the Greenford Residential Group for the Environment, showeth

That Ealing Council is demanding an extravagant increase in rates from the residents of Greenford, and the rest of the borough of Ealing to which we object most strongly.

The petition is signed by a large number of residents especially from the Greenford area. It stands in the name of Mr. N. D. Keating and Mrs. C. A. Keating, chairman and secretary respectively of the Greenford Residential Group for the Environment. They are protesting most vigorously with thousands of other signatories against the horrendous, hideous and totally unjustified rate increase by Ealing Labour council of 65 per cent. for domestic ratepayers and 57·3 per cent. for industrialists.

Domestic ratepayers are finding it extremely difficult, and many find it impossible, to pay the horrendous increase. The increase in industrial rates is expected to threaten jobs, has already caused people to lose jobs and will increase prices.

As I have said, there are thousands of signatories.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will do everything in its power to help us in our protest against this outrageous rates increase.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Speaker: It would be for the convenience of the House if the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) presented his second petition now.

Residential Development (Northolt)

9.36 am

Mr. Greenway: I have the honour to present a second petition.

To the Honourable the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the Northolt Village Residents Association, showeth:

(1) That we wish to register the strongest possible objections to the proposal for change of use of the 'Sadia' site in Rowdell Road, Northolt, to incorporate a housing and non-industrial development;

which includes a mosque.

(2) That we believe that the proposal, and the circumstances under which the London Borough of Ealing purchased the land and intend to dispose of it need full, frank and public discussion

and a public inquiry.

The petition is in the name of the chairman of the Northolt Village residents association, Mr. Harry Hellier, the vice-chairman, Mr. Adams, the hon. secretary, Mrs. Carole Adams, and the treasurer, Mr. Douglas Greatorex, and many thousands of signatories. The petition concerns the proposal of Ealing council to sell an industrial site which has always been a site for jobs and industry to a group which proposes to change its use, build a mosque and residential housing in the middle of the industrial estate. That will add greatly to the traffic difficulties in an already congested area and to the difficulty of residents with jobs on the site. The site is an industrial site and not a residential site. It has never been a residential site. There are strong objections about the proposal and local people have not been consulted by Ealing council.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will support our demand that Ealing Council immediately set in motion the procedures to hold a full public inquiry to review the purchase, disposal and future use of the site

along the lines of the public meeting that I called, attended by 500 people.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Retirement Age

9.38 am

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am pleased to present the petition from citizens of Leicester, other local residents and the officers and members of the pensions and retirement care campaign concerning the state pension eligibility for men.

At present women may retire at the age of 60 on state pension and men may only do that at the age of 65. While some hon. Members and others are fit, willing and anxious to remain at work into their 70s and 80s, too many people who are desperate for a dignified and decent retirement at 60 are forced to stay at work until they are 65 and to retain jobs that others who are unemployed are desperate to have. I pay my special tribute to the Leicestershire union of mineworkers and its leader, Mr. Jack Jones, for collecting so many of the signatures, of which there are over 500.

The petition is from the citizens of Leicester and other local residents.

It sheweth that

the present State Pension Eligibility Age for men is 65 years and that this is discriminatory to the extent that women are elibible at age 60, although they may work to age 65.

Wherefore your Petitioners Pray that your Honourable House will urge the Government to ensure the taking of immediate steps to establish a Voluntary Retirement Age of 60 for both Men and Women.

The petition is presented in the light of a petition of over 1 million signatures, of which this is the first stage, and a predecessor of which I had the honour to present some years ago, and in the light of the totally unacceptable and wretched level of unemployment of Leicester and throughout the country.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Licensing (Amendment) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

Clause 1

VARIATION ORDERS ETC.

9.41 am

Mr. Speaker: I call Sir Bernard Braine to speak to his amendment No. 1.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): May I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker? When the House adjourned last Friday, I was speaking to amendment No. 1, but also to amendment No. 13. The two are interlinked in such a way that you recognised that there should be one debate. Therefore, I hope that you will allow me to pursue the argument on which I embarked, because of the inter-relationship of the two amendments.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. I did not make it clear that my selection remains as it was last week, and that with amendment No. 1 we shall take amendment No.13, in page 1, line 22, after '11.30 p.m.' insert

'with a two hour break between the opening hour and closing hour'.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 22, leave out '11.30 p.m.' and insert '11 p.m.'.

When the House adjourned last Friday, I was on the point of summing up the case for the two amendments, which is concerned with flexibility and hours of opening. It might help the House if I summarise the beneficial effects of my two amendments on licensees and public houses, and above all in relation to public order, road safety and health.

I have always made it plain that the overwhelming majority of licensees are decent, hard-working people who need some protection from the pressure of the drink industry for ever-increasing consumption and the extended hours in which it can take place. Hon. Members will know from their own experience that the desire for extended opening hours is not universally held by all licensees or by their wives and families.

Two days ago I was delighted to receive, out of the blue, a letter from Mr. Eddie Johnson, landlord of The Crown, a public house in High road, Loughton. I have never met Mr. Johnson, but he gives me permission to read the letter to the House. He says:

"Dear Sir Bernard,

I would like to congratulate you on your stand against any relaxation of the licensing laws.

As a publican of 28 years, I have seen how the erosion of everything we hold dear in this country seems to have been accompanied by an increase in drunken, yobbish behaviour."

Mr. Johnson is making the point that I have made more than once in the House. He continues:

"I enclose a copy of an article that I had published in the *Morning Advertiser* three years ago. Since then they have put an embargo on any correspondence from me pertaining to the Flexi Laws campaign—indeed one of the features of that newspaper now is that opposition to the measure they say is nil whereas I know that most publicans of my acquaintance are against reform."

In the article, Mr. Johnson made it clear that, in his view, longer and more flexible hours are not needed. He also met head-on the argument that tourists grumble about afternoon closing and argue for later opening. He says:

"Pressure on the Government from the Brewers Society, the Tourist Board and would you believe, the National Union of Licensed Victuallers to allow our pubs to stay open later and longer, is getting stronger. As far as the NULV is concerned, it must be the first time in history a group is supporting an idea that will mean much more work for its members for much less pay. One reason given by the Board is that our licensing laws make tourists stay away and that the laws are silly. Do tourists stay away? London already can't cope with the numbers."

In 1985 report by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry concluded:

"the tourism industry would greatly benefit by a liberalisation of the existing laws. We consider that, both in regard to opening hours, and in provisions for families to take children with them into public houses, a change in the legislation is needed."

But where is the evidence for the claim that the availability of drink is a major determinant of people's choice of holiday location? The Scottish experience provides no such evidence. Between 1979 and 1985, the number of overseas visitors to Scotland increased by 8 per cent. In England and Wales over the same period, the number of foreign tourists increased by 54 per cent.

It is perhaps just possible that the failure of licensed premises to cater for families with children could be a significant factor in persuading British families to holiday abroad, but it is highly unlikely. For there is nothing in our existing law to prevent licensees from setting aside family rooms, provided that the rooms in question do not contain bars. The apparent unwillingness of many licencess or the brewery companies behind them to cater for whole families within the current law surely must be taken as showing a lack of demand for such facilities.

Compared with factors such as the value of the pound and the idiosyncrasies of the British weather, the difficulty of obtaining a drink in a public house at 4 o'clock in the afternoon is surely of minimal significance in deterring foreign tourists from coming to this country. Would American tourists, for example, be deterred from holidaying in this country by a two-hour break in the drinking day? I think not. Indeed, in the United States, alcohol consumption is falling precisely because of greater public awareness of the health risks associated with alcohol. One third of adult Americans are, in fact, teetotal.

In New Zealand, as I said last Friday, the Minister of Justice is being urged by a departmental committee to introduce a period of closure of public houses between 2 pm and 4 pm—in view of what has been happening in the House, this reads strangely—on the ground that it would help public houses in New Zealand achieve the "favourable image" characteristic of English pubs. How ironical, and how sad that at the very moment that our system is prasied and may be copied, the sponsors of this ill-considered Bill are seeking to abandon it in this country. There is no reason to believe that the tourist trade would be damaged by acceptance of amendments Nos. 1 and 13. Indeed, it can be argued that acceptance of the two amendments would help to retain the attractiveness of England and Wales to foreign tourists.

In our previous debates, much of our discussion has focused on road safety. I should like to summarise my views on that as it relates to the two amendments. As my

hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out last Friday, the issue between the supporters and the opponents of the Bill is primarily concerned with the facts. I agree with him that, in relation to road safety, the primary issue is the nature of the relationship between the availability of alcohol, and death and injury on the roads, and whether increased availability would be likely to increase the number of alcohol-related deaths and injuries.

Everyone accepts that a definitive answer to those questions is not possible because the statistical information that would decide the matter is not available. It is partly because of the absence of this vital information that the issue between the supporters and the opponents of the Bill is also that of on whom the burden of proof should be made to lie.

That raises an interesting question. It is not for me, as an opponent of the Bill, to prove that, in the absence of the relevant statistics, the Bill is undesirable. It is those who want to change the law who must show beyond any reasonable doubt, that to do so would not be harmful. I say here and now that prima facie there is a danger that increased availability might lead to increased deaths and injuries on our roads.

If that is so, the onus should be on the supporters of the Bill to show that increased availability will not lead to increased harm. Until that is done Parliament should follow the safer course. So far the supporters have not been able to do so. Questions to the Department of Transport have not produced figures to support their argument. It is entirely wrong to argue that the onus is on those who oppose the Bill to show positively that increased availability will lead to increased harm. That argument is utterly unacceptable. If the matter in dispute cannot be conclusively decided one way or the other, Parliament must choose the safer course—which, in this instance, is represented by my two amendments. They would go some way to control the availability of alcohol and would especially help to prevent continuous drinking throughout the day.

Why must we err on the side of caution? Why would continuous drinking hours be likely to increase road traffic accidents? It is clear that the incidence of alcohol-related traffic accidents is already closely related to the hours during which public houses are open. We do not need to look into the crystal when we can consult the book of experience.

I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has denied that there is a perceptible relationship between pub opening hours and road accidents. I can only ask him to reconsider the pattern of road accidents by the hour of the day at which they occur. I should like to quote the words of Dr. James Dunbar, director of the Tayside safe driving project, who is one of our country's leading authorities on drinking and driving. Incidentally, I believe that Dr. Dunbar went to the same school and university as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood. In a telephone conversation on Wednesday night, he told me:

> "There is a significant difference in the times at which alcohol related accidents and non alcoholic accidents occur. Non alcohol accidents peak during the rush hours when people are travelling to and from work. Alcohol related accidents first begin to occur significantly at midday, an hour or so after the pubs open, and then increase steadily through the rest of the day, peaking at between midnight and two o'clock in the morning, after the pubs have closed."

Of course alcohol-related traffic accidents are affected by pub opening hours—to what else would we expect them to be related? At the moment, the peak of alcohol-related traffic accidents occurs late at night. The danger inherent in the Bill's proposal for continuous afternoon drinking is that the peak would then start earlier in the day, during the late afternoon, when schoolchildren and other especially vulnerable road users, such as the elderly, are about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood argued that extended drinking hours would encourage more leisurely drinking, which in turn would tend to reduce the likelihood of drink-related accidents. Although he cannot offer any proof, that is the basis of his case. I begin to despair, because there is no force in that argument at all. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) explained last Friday that even small quantities of alcohol impair driving ability and increase accident risk. He was absolutely right. Thus, the possibility of more leisurely drinking hardly matters in this context. Moreover, and as Dr. Dunbar has pointed out, if my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood were correct, we should expect the average blood alcohol level of drink-driving offenders in Scotland to have declined since the introduction of extended opening hours. However, Dr. Dunbar's own research into the question has discovered no such decline. In other words, there is no evidence of lower blood alcohol levels having been brought about in Scotland by extended opening hours.

Dr. Dunbar goes further. Other research that he has carried out has shown that approximately one third of drink-driving offenders, aged 29 and over, are already problem drinkers, who habitually drink to excess. They are not simply unlucky people who have been caught out on a single occasion, possibly when celebrating the enactment of this Bill. They are people who regularly drink to excess before driving. It would be naive in the extreme to believe that people with such a weakness would not take advantage of extended opening hours, and that their doing so would not make them even more dangerous drivers than they are already.

In Dr. Dunbar's experience, an accident that results in death is often an accident that follows all-day drinking. As a Scot living and working in Scotland, he is strongly in favour of a two-hour break in the drinking day precisely to reduce the likelihood of all-day drinking followed by driving, the results of which are all too familiar to him in the mortuary.

Perhaps the supporters of the Bill can now begin to understand the logic and the good sense of the recommendation of the New Zealand ministerial committee, which, believe it or not, has just recommended that there should be an afternoon break in that country, which has never had one. It has recommended that because of the splendid example set and the splendid image created for English and Welsh public houses by our afternoon break over a long period. Is that not ironic?

There is a strong possibility that at least one in every 20 road accident deaths involving innocent children is alcohol-related. Twice as many children and young people are killed every year by an alcohol-related road death than were drowned in the Zeebrugge ferry disaster that has so shocked the nation. The onus is upon those who want to abolish the break to prove that not one child will be harmed by the measure. Magistrates must have the power

[Sir Bernard Braine]

to act and to protect life by being able to place a break in continuous all-day drinking. That is the purpose of the amendment.

Amendment No.13 would not only have a protective effect with regard to the incidence of drinking and driving; it would also serve to mitigate the worst effects of the Bill in a more general sense. A two-hour break in the drinking day may not seem a great amount of time in relation to a single public house but, in a city with perhaps 1,000 public houses and clubs, the total reduction brought about by amendment No. 13 would be substantial—a maximum of 2,000 fewer drinking hours per day. Such a reduction would certainly help to reduce the harm to public health.

If anyone doubts that the increased availability of alcohol would lead to increased harm, let them explain why the highest incidence of alcohol-related liver disease is found among those occupational groups having the easiest access to alcohol—that is, those who work in the drink industry itself, including publicans and managers of licensed clubs.

More than 10 years ago I was the chairman of the first working party in the United Kingdom to look into the effects of alcohol in the place of work. I was not popular when we published figures showing which trades and professions were most vulnerable to drinking alcohol to excess. I am sorry to say that publicans and their staff headed the list.

10 am

The very awareness of the drink trade that its employees are at special risk of experiencing alcohol-related problems has led to numerous drinks companies, to their great credit, to establish special policies on alcohol problems for their employees. These often include measures to reduce the availability of alcohol during working hours. The working party's examination of alcohol in the workplace was followed up by effective action. Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive to the drinks industry published in 1982 stated:

"It is recommended that drinkable alcohol producers should have a clear and written policy aimed at protecting both the health and safety of their employees. The policy could form part of their safety policy under section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work Act and might include the following elements:

(a) Control of the availability of alcohol.

(b) Restriction or prohibition of consumption of alcohol on the premises.

(c) Establishment of agreed disciplinary procedures for alcohol abuse."

Amendments Nos. 1 and 13 are based on the truth that the drink trade recognises and applies to its own work force, if not to its customers. The amendments would reduce the overall availability of alcohol in a locality without damaging the principle of flexibility.

I believe that all the expert bodies concerned with health and safety who have expressed an opinion on licensing reform would support the amendments. The dangers of increasing the already huge problem of alcohol misuse are real and are far too great for us to countenance changing the existing law so precipitately in the direction of extended pub opening hours—a step so manifestly in the dark. The least the nation expects of Parliament now or at any time is that we should take the safer course if there is a risk to health and life.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) will forgive me if I do not take up all the important matters he raised. Indeed, during our deliberations we have often discussed the experience in Scotland, and the content of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' report, and argued that there does not appear to have been an increase in alcohol consumption since that change in the law. Therefore, there does not appear to have been an increase in consumption as a result of increased availability of alcohol. There is not much point in my crossing swords with my right hon. Friend on those matters again.

Amendment No. 1 raised an important matter. The scheme of the Bill provides for licensing justices to pay regard to matters such as nuisance to adjoining residents when deciding the closing hour at night. The Government have made plain their dislike of the scheme of the Bill, not least because of the resource implications. But one is bound to have sympathy for amendment No. 1 because it grapples with a problem with which the House would have to grapple if there were a different scheme of licensing reform and we were, for example, to choose a scheme which allowed individual licensees to decide when they would and would not open.

I am sure that if such a scheme of reform were proposed, the House would discuss anxiously what the final closing hour should be. We would certainly need to have regard to the convenience of people who lived near the licensed premises and we would have to discuss anxiously the possibility of nuisance being caused to adjoining occupiers. Therefore, it is absolutely right and proper that my right hon. Friend should have highlighted that matter in his amendment today.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Yet again the Minister has referred to the experience in Scotland and I fully understand that it may not be appropriate to have another discussion on the different conclusions that can be drawn from it. However, I must repeat that I regret that we did not set up means of monitoring the results of the changes in Scotland. Had we done so, there would have been much more light cast on our deliberations on the Bill. There are seldom opportunities for measuring changes of what some people would call a social experiment, and it is a pity that we have denied ourselves the ability to argue further with precision the consequences of this legislation.

Mr. Waddington: Obviously, there is a great deal in what the hon. Gentleman says, but he would not wish to ignore the statistical evidence which is available—he will acknowledge that some important messages attach to it. The statistics reveal that since 1978—that is after the reform had been in place for a year or two—the number of drivers killed over the legal limit has decreased. Certainly one does not see a picture from the statistics that exist of an increased number of deaths on the roads in Scotland, although there has been an increased availability of alcohol.

Mr. Dubs: Those figures are certainly encouraging, but, without wishing to stray beyond the limits of debating the Bill, there have been other changes in Scotland since 1978, including an increase in unemployment, so lower incomes and people having relatively less to spend on drink than previously. That may well be a factor affecting that period.

It is difficult to analyse these matters with precision. Had we thought this through when the changes were made in Scotland, we might have devised more methods of monitoring the situation than we did. I am aware that there are figures. Indeed, the Minister has mentioned figures and survey information and I would not deny their existence. But there are differences of opinion among experts who have examined the figures as to what precisely happened and why. We have missed an opportunity, but that is water under the bridge.

Amendment No. 1 suggests that the latest time to which a licensee may keep a pub open should be 11 pm instead of 11.30 pm—in other words, the normal practice in London. In some parts pubs close even earlier than that now.

The second amendment seeks to establish a two-hour break at some point in the drinking day. I should like to say something about the significance of these proposed changes. It has been said that tourism, which we all want to encourage, is deterred by our licensing laws. There may be arguments for changes in our licensing laws, but the argument that more tourists would be attracted if we changed them is not a powerful one, because there are many other motives for coming to this country.

In the past one of the deterrents to tourism was the inability of tourists visiting many parts of Britain to get a decent meal. That is changing and the quality of food in ordinary, inexpensive restaurants has gone up, although as I am a London Member I do not have the same chance to visit other parts of Britain as hon. Members with far-flung constituencies. That improvement has been more important for tourism than the licensing hours.

Secondly, many tourists stay in hotels and, as many hotels are licensed, guests can go back to their hotel and have a drink at any hour. As hotel residents they are not limited by the licensing hours and can more or less treat the hotel as their home. The House recently passed a Bill that relaxed the hours during which people may drink with meals. The previous provision that people could not drink with meals after 3 o'clock in the afternoon has gone. In so far as we wish to encourage sensible drinking, drinking with a meal is probably the best way to do that and all the medical evidence supports that view. All this makes greater our ability to attract tourists and we do not need to use the argument about extending licensing hours.

I shall now turn to the arguments about extending the hours to 11.30 pm. People may have difficulty in getting home because public transport is not what it ought to be. This is not the time fully to debate public transport and you would soon call me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I attempted to do that. However, there is clearly a relationship between the time people stop drinking and the method by which they get home. It is fine if they are in their local pub and can walk home. That is the most desirable situation. But sometimes they have to find public transport. We know that after 11 o'clock at night public transport is hard to get and after 11.30 it seems to stop altogether. Therefore, there would be an extra incentive for people to visit pubs by motor car, and that is precisely the danger.

Sometimes when I am on my way back from a constituency meeting after 11 o'clock, I am conscious that I have to drive a bit more carefully in case I encounter people who have left pubs. Such people are quite noticeable sometimes. They are also noticeable at times such as Christmas eve and new year's eve, and at such times my wife and I do our best not to get into a motor car at all, because now and again one observes people who should not be driving.

The later that pubs remain open in the evening, the greater the danger that motorists will have been to them and will have had a bit more to drink than they should have had. As I have said before, it is perfectly clear that even if a motorist is below the legal limit—and in my view the legal limit is too high—his driving ability may be impaired. All the research suggests that every drink will impair a person's driving ability a little, even though the way that it works differs from one person to another. Everybody's driving ability is affected for the worse by having more to drink. Anything that increases the likelihood that a motorist may have an extra drink or two must be discouraged.

10.15 am

There is a further point about the effect of later opening on local people. There is no fixed time at which people go to bed, but certainly the later in the evening that people drink the more likely it is that disturbance will be caused to people living nearby. Many pubs are in residential areas. Where they are not, the situation may be different. I know from experience in my constituency that there can be a lot of noise and disturbance.

Even now when pubs stops serving alcohol at 11 o'clock there is a period during which people are allowed to drink up. By the time they get out of the pub and get into their cars is can be quite late. There will be the noise of car doors slamming, and that disturbance can go on late into the night even with an 11 o'clock finish. If pubs were allowed to open until 11.30, the noise and distrubance caused to people who, for example, may have to get up at 6 am to go work would go on until midnight. We must respect the right of people to sleep and we must respect people's right to have a bit of peace and quiet in the evening. For those reasons, I am concerned about any aspect of the Bill which would make the likelihood of a peaceful night's sleep remote.

The other powerful argument by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) in relation to the afternoon break is about schoolchildren coming home. It is clear that there are more car accidents in the afternoon than in the morning. It is also clear from the figures that young children coming home from school are more at risk than when they are going to school in the morning. It may be that they are more alert in the morning and walk to school more slowly than they do in the afternoon. Perhaps motorists are more careful when going to work in the morning. Even now, some people driving in the afternoon have had rather more to drink than they should. There are disturbing and distressing instances of accidents that have occurred during the afternoon, but I shall not take up the time of the House by going through them.

Certainly we want to minimise the danger to schoolchildren on their way home from school. Of course when they leave school in the afternoon they are boisterous. Schools have railings to prevent children from running across the road. However, it is easy for schoolchildren on their way home to forget themselves when they want to go and play football or whatever. A little bit of thoughtlessness on the part of the child and an inability on the part of the motorists to stop quickly enough can cause a tragic accident. We want to minimise the chances of such things happening.

[Mr. Dubs]

I view these amendments with sympathy and I fully understand the motives of the right hon. Member for Castle Point in moving them. However, it is right that the House should again have its attention drawn to the possible dangers. Of course, there are benefits on the other side, but they are part of a broader discussion of the Bill and are not part of a specific discussion of the amendments. I hope that amendment No. 1 will be accepted, because it seems sensible and right and will give people peace and quiet and lessen the danger a little.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I shall be brief. I should like to speak about one or two of the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) in relation to the letter that he received from Mr. Johnson. I emphasise that, under the provisions of the Bill, Mr. Johnson is not compelled to do anything that he does not wish to do. It is entirely up to Mr. Johnson whether he changes his present hours of opening.

My right hon. Friend spoke about tourism in relation to Scotland and England and Wales. The overwhelming majority of tourists to Great Britain have to come through London. That is a fact of life, and therefore needs to be taken into account in the tourism argument.

I live next door to a pub in London. I am in no doubt that there is a strong argument for amendment No. 1. There are also arguments against amendment No. 1, but it does not raise matters of principle in relation to the Bill. In the correspondence that I have received about the Bill, the most significant complaint—I have had many letters of support—has been about later opening hours.

The remarks made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) about amendment No. 13 have been illuminating. Amendment No. 13, of course, does not technically achieve what my right hon. Friend is aiming for, and that is the afternoon break. Clearly, if amendment No. 13 were accepted, it would be possible for a licensee to open at 10.30 am, to close at 10.35 for two hours, and then continue trading thereafter.

I am not persuaded by the arguments about amendment No. 1. It is not a matter of principle. I recommend that the House accept amendment No. 1.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I beg to move, That further consideration of the Bill, as amended, be now adjourned.

I give notice that if the Question is agreed, I propose to name Friday 3 July as the day for the Report stage to be resumed.

The Bill is an all-party measure, involving debates held over two days—30 January and 27 March. It received an unopposed Second Reading and has successfully gone through five Committee sittings. Standing Committee C never sat later than about 7.30 pm. It is not the case that the Bill reached the Floor of the House as a result of unreasonable behaviour on the part of its sponsors. Last Friday, on Report, the Bill had a full day on the Floor of the House.

It has had magnificent support from hon. Members on both sides of the House who, on many occasions, gave up other engagements to be present to support it. Frankly, it has progressed through the House against apparently overwhelming odds; it was No. 8 in the ballot. Of course, it has been opposed for honourable reasons, principally by my right hon. Friend the hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). Some hon. Members are opposed to it to a greater or lesser degree and for different reasons. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who had hoped to be here for the debate but has other engagements, has expressed reservations on some matters. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) has expressed his reservations. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister has stated the Government's reservations, which are principally concerned with resources.

Earlier this week, as sponsor of the Bill, I had to ask myself a crucial question. It was this: given the amendments that have been selected for debate and their grouping, given the days that have been allocated for private Members' Bills, and given my right hon. Friend's formidable debating powers, knowledge and known views, was there any prospect that the Licensing (Amendment) Bill could reach the statute book, even on the most optimistic assumptions? The most optimistic assumptions were that today a large number of supporters of the Bill would be present to win closure votes if necessary and that the general election would not take place until after the summer recess.

Hope springs eternal, especially in the breasts of private Members who try to get legislation through the House. I had to conclude that, even on such assumptions, the Bill could not reach the statute book. I am not a betting man, but if somebody had been offered odds at 100 to one on the Bill reaching the statute book, he would not have put £1 on, but would have kept it for a rainy day, possibly in Scotland, on which he could have used it to shelter in a pub.

I wrote to the supporters of the Bill, stating that they should feel under no obligation to be present if they had other pressing engagements today—the rough equivalent of the one-line Whip. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) is here. In Scottish terms, gemmes a bogey. There are good reasons for the belief that hon. Members have many other pressing engagements. I have important constituency engagements this evening. It is a matter of record that supporters of the Bill, both hon. Members and wholly innocent academics, have been subjected to a vicious smear campaign by an hon. Member who is not a member of the Standing Committee.

In the light of that, I emphasise that I did not move this motion because I have to go to what the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) last week referred to as my marginal constituency. It is a matter of record that, at the last election, I received over 46 per cent. of the popular vote and a majority of over 8,000. We in Eastwood will fight for every vote because every vote counts. Let the House be under no misapprehension that my commitments are wholly compatible with my presence here, if necessary, until 2.30 pm. Indeed, thanks to the Government's splendid policy of allowing more competition on domestic air routes, there is an excellent air service between Glasgow and London.

At the next election I do not expect my majority to be as high as that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. I have looked at his results. The general swing of opinion does not seem to matter for him. His majority simply goes up and up. In one sense, the House is about majorities. It is also about the rights of minorities to be heard. In relation to the Bill, my right hon. Friend

is in a minority. He may wish to express his views in full on the general matters. Of course, that is his right, and I shall be here to listen.

Let us not forget the circumstances in which the Bill received an unopposed Second Reading — it was certainly by careful planning, but it was not inadvertently slipped through at 2.30 pm. At about nine minutes past two, after a debate in which he said that he would oppose a Second Reading, and after my winding-up speech, the hon. Member for Newham, South did not seek in any way to divide the House. It is possible that the hon. Member may have been persuaded by my eloquence in my summing up, but I have some doubts about that. Both of us knew the consequences of the hon. Gentleman not dividing the House and of my sitting down at nine minutes past two o'clock rather than at 28 minutes past the hour. One of the consequences was that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who had been sitting quietly in his place for some time, was able to speak to his Bill. That is not a Bill which is supported by those of my hon. Friends who support this Bill or by myself, but we felt that there was no reason why the hon. Gentleman should not have his way. That is an important principle.

10.30 am

There is another important principle that is fundamental to the House, and that is parliamentary privilege. The hon. Member for Workington is not in his place, but I feel that I have to say that that right has been grossly abused and debased by him. What he said and implied about me last week is not an issue, although to be accused of not caring about the deaths of young children, which was clearly the implication of what the hon. Gentleman said, as recorded in column 528 of *Hansard*, is not a very pleasant experience. Perhaps my reaction to that reflects the fact that I am used in the main to criticism from Scottish Labour Members, who would never have made that sort of speech. Under parliamentary privilege the issue has been debated at length and I shall not go over it now.

The hon. Member for Workington has smeared three of my hon. Friends on a wholly bogus point. It has been made clear by Mr. Speaker and by the Chairman of Standing Committee C that they behaved with absolute propriety. In columns 498 and 499 the hon. Gentleman smeared two distinguished Scottish academics. I have been a Scottish academic and I know that an individual's reputation for intellectual integrity is fundamental. Essentially the accusation was that academics had fiddled research data because they were being funded by the Scotch Whisky Association. The hon. Gentleman quoted the exact figure of £49,000, but he did not say that the project in question was funded from various sources, including Her Majesty's Government. The funding from the Government was about £100,000.

I do not know the motives of the hon. Member for Workington and I do not know whether he was genuinely misinformed. I do know, however, that it is not reasonable to assume that the three organisations which were mentioned—Alcohol Concern, the Scottish Council on Alcoholism and the British Medical Association—would have deliberately misinformed the hon. Gentleman or any other hon. Member.

The Bill was introduced for a number of reasons. It is a personal assertion of belief in the Act of Union of 1707, which I believe has benefits north and south of the border. That is possibly under greater threat than many hon. Members realise. It is an assertion of belief in the Act of Union for a Scottish Member to introduce on the basis of experience in Scotland measures that relate to England and Wales. Something broadly right in principle was done in Scotland when the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 was put on the statute book by the previous Labour Government.

It has never been my contention that everything in Scotland is necessarily perfect. I believe, however, that the evidence shows that the results of the 1976 Act are either positive or neutral when set against various criteria. That is what the evidence suggests, and my personal observations both before and after the passing of the Act confirm that. I repeat my invitation to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point to visit Scotland and to meet the police in my constituency. I would go further. If my right hon. Friend is minded to do that, I would invite him to address my constituency Conservative association, but I do not suggest that the subject of that address should necessarily be licensing hours. The invitation is a genuine one.

I believe that the licensing law in England and Wales is a mess. It is highly biased against pubs and clubs, which provide a controlled environment for the consumption of alcohol. I shall exemplify the position, as I did broadly in Committee. Let us assume that a constituent of an hon. Member arrives in London on a July afternoon and wishes to have a drink. What are his options? First, he could come here. He could seek out his Member of Parliament, who would doubtless take him for necessary refreshment. Secondly, he could buy alcohol in an off-licence and then sit in a park and drink it. He could now, as the hon. Member for Battersea said, enter a restaurant and consume alcohol there. He could take a train to Gatwick and back and consume alcohol there. What he could not do under the present licensing laws is enter a public house and consume alcohol there, even if the licensee wished the public house to be open. I do not believe that to be sensible.

The Bill is not about off-licences. As I understand the state of the law in England and Wales, it is legal for an 18-year-old who is accompanied by two 16-year-olds to be handed £5, for example, by the 16-year-olds on the street and for him to enter an off-licence to buy alcohol for the 16-year-olds to consume on a park bench, for example. No one will have committed an offence, even if the person in the off-licence knew what was happening. I may be wrong in that interpretation of the law, but I think that the law in England and Wales needs reform.

The Bill has united many people. It has united hon. Members from both sides of the House and those who may be said to have some self-interest in its passage, such as the National Union of Licensed Victuallers, the Brewers Society, the National Association of Licensed House Managers and the Transport and General Workers Union, as the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) told the Committee.

It has the support of the tourist organisations, although I do not think that the tourist argument is necessarily decisive. It also has the support of the three local authority associations in England and Wales — namely, the Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of County

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

Councils. Such associations cannot reasonably be said to have a financial or commercial interest in the passage of the Bill.

If my proposal is accepted, the Bill will not be dead; it will remain on the Order Paper. It establishes an important point, and it could well be debated again on 3 July. There may or may not be a June election. If there is not, the supporters of the Bill, on an all-party basis, would be able to approach the Government and say, "The climate for change has been clearly established. What do the Government propose to do now?" If there is a June election, I believe that, irrespective of the result of that election, reform is inevitable. Such reform need not necessarily take the precise form suggested in this Bill; there are arguments for different types of reform.

I should like to thank the Bill's supporters, and also to thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for his courteous neutrality. I also thank the hon. Member for Battersea for what he said. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point has opposed the Bill for wholly honourable reasons.

I hope that the House will accept the motion as an appropriate procedure, so that, after a due interval for the contributions of others — especially, perhaps, from my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister — other measures in which private Members believe may also be debated today, possibly the last day of private Members' time in this Parliament.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): I apologise for not being present at the commencement of this morning's proceedings. I spent a very successful day in Carlisle yesterday, where we strengthened our hold on the city council. I motored home late last night, and I had to get up rather early this morning to come here. I regret not having been here on time. It was no one's fault; the time factor was to blame.

I am glad that I was here to listen to the tail end of the speech by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). As I came into the Chamber, however, I wondered where all the supporters of the Bill had gone. I should have thought that they would be present to give the hon. Gentleman moral support in his endeavours.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Because of the time when the hon. Gentleman came into the Chamber, he may not have appreciated the precise position in relation to my supporters. I explained that earlier, before he arrived.

Mr. Lewis: I thank the hon. Gentleman for putting me right, and I apologise if I have said anything that I should not have said. Nevertheless, I should have thought that the supporters of a measure of this kind, whatever the circumstances, would have been present right up to the end to give it its funeral. But evidently the hon. Gentleman has done that himself with his motion.

10.45 am

I have taken part in a number of debates during my 22 years in the House. I have been privileged to take part in some, on a non-party basis, with the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), and I have vivid and happy recollections of discussing a similar Bill in Standing Committee in the early hours of one morning. We got it on to the Floor of the House on the same day.

Sir Bernard Braine: The hon. Gentleman may recall that that Bill sought to bring children under 14, unaccompanied, into licensed bars. No wonder we were able to defeat it.

Mr. Lewis: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He is absolutely right. The tragedy is that the present Paymaster General was the promoter of that Bill. However, Parliament in its wisdom defeated it.

This may be the last time that I shall take part in a debate in this hallowed place that I have been privileged to serve, and have loved to serve. The work done by the right hon. Member for Castle Point in opposing the Bill, in Committee and at various other stages, should be commended. I should like to pay respectful tribute to his excellent work on this subject over the years. The right hon. Gentleman is not a strict teetotaller, as I am, and I do not hold that against him. However, he and a number of others can see the potential dangers in opening the floodgates. Heaven knows, we have enough of a problem on our hands now. To open the doors for all-day drinking would be a retrograde step, and I do not want it to happen.

I am all in favour of the principle of flexible rostering, and I feel that the hon. Member for Eastwood should consider it. But I am dead against an extension of the present hours, as are a number of people in the trade, because of the potential dangers, particularly in relation to young people. I admire the hon. Gentleman for bringing the Bill to a conclusion, and I am only sorry—you will correct me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I am out of order—that the Selection Committee that selected the members of the Committee to examine the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. We are debating the motion that further consideration be adjourned, The hon. Gentleman should stick to that.

Mr. Lewis: I shall try to stick to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was merely trying to say that I am sorry that, as a result of my intervention in sending a letter and raising a point on the Floor of the House, some hon. Members whom I named, and who are not dishonest people, have now taken a personal dislike to me. That has been evident in the measure of their friendship, and I deprecate it.

Having said that, let me congratulate the right hon. Member for Castle Point. I know that he will be back, not only in his present capacity but as the Father of the House. I wish him well, and all the others with whom I have been privileged to serve in this place for nearly 23 years. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be as successful in his opposition in the future as he has been in the past.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am greatly moved by the kind remarks of the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis). I do not think that the public fully appreciate how, on some great social issues, the members of the different political parties work together for what they consider to be the public good. I recollect many happy campaigns in conjunction with the hon. Gentleman and members of other parties. I am sorry that he is leaving Parliament; he will be greatly missed by us all.

The motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) was wholly unexpected, but it was a welcome development and I accept it in the spirit in which it was moved. The whole House should be grateful to my hon. Friend for suggesting that time should be provided for further reflection on the Bill. Nevertheless, I

am not surprised. My hon. Friend's experience as a Scottish Health Minister will have made him sensitive to at least some of the criticisms of the Bill that I have found it necessary to make. I am grateful to him for his kind words. Throughout all our exchanges, he has conducted his case with great courtesy and good humour.

I am not opposed to the Bill, any more than the hon. Member for Carlisle is opposed to it, because it seeks to allow greater flexibility of opening hours, but I am opposed to the move to lengthen the total number of hours on the supposed ground that it would make for more civilised drinking. That is complete nonsense. It would certainly increase the availability of alcohol. That might be good for the profits of the drinks trade, but it would fly in the face of warnings from the World Health Organisation, the medical profession, the royal colleges and the alcohol care agencies. They have warned that an increase in alcohol consumption is inevitably accompanied by an increase in health harm.

I shall develop only one aspect which it is important to put on record, as and when we return to the issue. Had we proceeded with the Bill this morning, I should have moved an amendment to draw attention to the prevalence of under-age drinking in public houses and to the serious implications for law and order and for the health of our young people. If debate on the Bill is to be adjourned, it must be adjourned on the understanding that these implications are grasped and that something is done about them. I draw some comfort from what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State said this morning: that the Government will have to insist that the implications are grasped and that something is done about them.

In raising this problem, I am attempting to follow the long and honourable tradition of Parliament, at least in the present century, of protecting children and young people generally against alcohol. The Bill does nothing to solve the problem of under-age drinking. If enacted unamended, the Bill would make the position worse.

There are several reasons why it is wise to adjourn consideration of the Bill—and, I hope, to drop it—but none is more important than the fact that, contrary to the best intentions of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood, it lengthens drinking time and increases the load on licensees at a time when under-age drinking is causing grave concern to the police, teachers, parents and the public at large.

I have with me a large collection of cuttings from newspapers that are published in every part of England and Wales that refer to illegal under-age drinking in public houses. The headlines are chilling. I take a few of them at random. The headline in the *Basildon Evening Echo* reads:

"Pub kids 12—drinking booze."

The headline in the *Reading Evening News* says:

"Teeny drinkers in health crisis."

The headline in the *Liverpool Echo* reads:

"High on the drink drug — up to 80 per cent. of Merseyside teenagers, some as young as 14, are drinking in pubs illegally."

And the *Manchester Advertiser* headline says:

"Children go to school drunk."

I could quote hundreds of examples, but those will suffice.

I have in my hand the monthly press digest for October that is published by the Institute of Alcohol Studies. It reveals a terrifying and nationwide problem. I shall refer to only one article, which, significantly enough, appeared in the *Police Review* of 19 October 1986. In this article Mr. Colin Sheppard looked at the link between juvenile crime and the alcohol consumed by under-age drinkers in public houses. Speaking of a 16-year-old sitting straight in his chair, his fingers gripping it to keep his balance, he reports that the boy said:

"Where I come from, lads start drinking when they are about 15 or 16, some more than others but usually on at least four days a week including weekends. The usual pattern is to pub crawl around the city pubs, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings, and then look for the wimps to pick off. It's hit and run, really, with us hunting in packs and sometimes being hunted. It's always good fun if Forest are at home and the away supporters are in town, then we get some real sport — a really good boot job on them makes the night. By about throwing out time I have had about eight or nine pints of ale like me mates and then we look for a club. If they won't let us in there's usually aggro — either on the bouncer or damage. Why do I do it? It's the thing to do. Booze and fight—what else is there that matters?"

Mr. Sheppard goes on to say——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the right hon. Gentleman that we are debating whether we should adjourn consideration of the Bill. He must relate his remarks to that and not make the speech that he intended to make on an amendment that we have not yet reached.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am referring not to an amendment but to the reason why I am not prepared to accept the adjournment of the Bill. You are quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to point out that an amendment that has not yet been reached would have gone into the matter in great detail. I do not propose to go into as much detail now as otherwise I should have done, but this is the last opportunity to tell the House and the country what is going on.

A moment ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood gave a long list of reasons why he thinks that the Bill, which had an unopposed Second Reading in this House, has a great deal of support in the country. Does it? If it does, it must be due to a fit of absence of mind. Therefore, it is right and proper and in the interests of children that I should produce evidence that was published in a recent issue of *Police Review*. Mr. Sheppard said:

"I asked 50 male offenders at the Nottingham Senior Attendance Centre. 'When did you start drinking alcohol regularly?' . . . No fewer than 23 said they had been drinking regularly in public houses since the age of 15. As one put it, 'I don't think anyone could stop youngsters having a drink under 18 if they wanted to. Anyway, why should they? No-one seems to bother. You never see the copper in pubs checking up on ages and the landlords don't bother because they are making a living.' . . . More than half the sample — 28 — said that the prime responsibility for under-age drinking was unconcerned parents and 26 felt that the licensee could do more to check on the ages of drinkers . . . Whereas only 11 saw a role for schools in educating the young about the problems of drink . . .

Twenty of the sample said they thought that drinking intoxicants to excess made them want to commit offences and a further 10 thought that alcohol made them more likely to commit offences. In 21 cases, drink was said to be likely to make them more agressive and 19 felt that the effect of drink was to increase their dislike of authority, in particular the police.

One youth said: 'Booze makes me silly and I hit people. It takes about 10 pints to get me like that and I get through that on Fridays and Saturdays. Where I live there's nowt else to do and that's it really . . . ' Four of the sample thought they had a health problem related to drinking. One 18-year-old told the group, 'I started when I was about 12 or 13, it was in local pubs, playing snooker and having a pint. I've been at it ever since. Last year I started buying Martini and

[Sir Bernard Braine]

cheap wine and I get through six bottles a week. I drink about 30 pints of beer a week in pubs and I don't really care. The doctor says my guts are in a mess.—that's life.'"

11 am

That is the situation about which I am complaining, and about which the Bill is completely evasive. Perhaps hon. Members will begin to see why head teachers are so concerned about what is happening — the deliberate breaking of the existing law, and here I am not talking about the Bill but the seeming impotence of the police in many areas and the turning of a blind eye to a worsening problem.

When it became known that I was opposing the Bill, I received a great volume of support from people who had begun to feel that nobody cared about the matter. After the Bill reached Committee, I received a letter from Mrs. D. R. Rivilland, MSc., headmistress and the chairman of the health education working party of the National Association of Head Teachers. Perhaps you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, knew of that worthy organisation in your previous capacity. Mrs. Rivilland wrote:

"I wish to protest most strongly about the Licensing Amendment Bill being put forward by Mr. Alan Stewart M.P. and I hope that you will include the following points in your opposition. The enormous increase in under-age drinking gives real concern to head teachers of secondary schools, particulary as the existing laws are already so difficult to enforce. Quite young children are now consuming units of alcohol on a regular basis and many parents are unaware that alcohol consumption and misuse by young people is a far more serious problem than abuse or experimentation with hard drugs".—

I repeat, "with hard drugs".

It is not only protests of that kind against the Bill, but the inadequacy of existing law, which the Bill would worsen, that should concern us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood has decided to adjourn the debate on his Bill, and it would be easy for me to accept that and go away quietly. I am not prepared to do that. Successive Governments have felt unable to grapple with the problem and have left it to private Members to introduce Bills, which, in one way or another, have proved defective, and I feel that that the present grave situation in regard to under-age drinking must be looked at in greater depth. That is why I insist that, if we are to accept the motion, we should be given some assurances on that.

The Justices' Clerks Society, whose members have unrivalled experience in this matter, tells us that the present law is inadequate—I shall deal later with what it says about my hon. Friend's Bill. In its recent report, "Licensing Law in the Eighties" the Justices' Clerks Society states:

"The question must then be posed. Where do the young persons obtain their liquor? Some steal it, but the majority go to the local public houses and off licences. There is clear evidence that young persons also obtain their intoxicating liquor from registered clubs and disco clubs, the latter allowing young people to buy and consume alcohol until late in the evening or early in the morning. There is no doubt that crimes of public disorder, violence and criminal damage occur after the young people leave the licensed premises. Magistrates talking to each other, and to their clerks, complain of two things:—(1) at the law which makes it so easy for young persons to obtain intoxicating liquor and for licence holders to sell it to them; and (2) at the police for not prosecuting more licence holders for selling intoxicating liquor to obvious minors and more young persons for consuming and buying."

That is evidence which the Home Office should be considering carefully — the evidence from the justices' clerks, who advise the licensing magistrates and upon whom they depend for help and guidance.

The justices' clerks go on to say:

"The police respond by complaining of the difficulties they encounter in prosecuting a licence holder in view of the necessity to prove he acted 'knowingly'. They also say that the courts too readily accept the word of the licence holder when he says that he could not tell that the young person was a minor."

The justices' clerks beg Parliament to do something about the matter.

They go on to ask why there is so much under-age drinking:

"In view of the fact that police, magistrates and clerks—and incidentally parents know that under-age drinking goes on day in and day out all over the country, what is the explanation?"

Of course, they know where the fault lies. They say:

"Experience has shown that it is difficult to obtain convictions in view of current legislation and the police simply hesitate to prosecute licence holders and young drinkers. In one police area in the south of England, only two licence holders were prosecuted for selling to minors, which, in the context of the problem nationwide, demands action, and effective action."

The justices' clerks suggest a course of action—I shall not go into it now, because it would require an amendment to the Bill, which we are not discussing now — that would certainly require a change in existing law that is not contemplated in this Bill.

I said earlier that for nine years I was the chairman of the National Council on Alcoholism. We built up a network of counselling agencies, and some hon. Members played a valuable role in our work. Indeed, one of the sponsors of the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), actually trained as a counsellor, and I pay warm tribute to him for that. I am now president of the Greater London alcohol advisory service, which co-ordinates such services throughout the capital. I can tell the House from the direct experience that I have gained over the past 20 years that matters have been getting steadily worse. Over that period—and this is why I am so loth to accept the motion to adjourn without qualification—young people have not been exempt from either the growth in consumption or its adverse consequences—especially with alcohol, as compared to other psycho-active and potentially addictive drugs. There is no generation gap or culture divide. It could be argued that young people's drinking patterns have already been aided and abetted by their seniors, and the variation orders in the Bill would certainly aid and abet them further.

I am not prepared therefore to accept the motion without some promises and undertakings because, over the past 20 years, the number of people drinking alcoholic beverages has increased, because drinking starts at a younger age and is more frequent, and because greater amounts of alcohol are consumed. The facts are known. A report on adolescent drinking was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security. I am delighted to see that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) — is with us. Long before she entered this House or became a Minister, she showed a keen interest in these matters. She has a deep knowledge of them. If there is one person occupying a role in government for which she is uniquely fitted by her experience, it is my hon. Friend. She will know that the

report prepared by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys during 1983-84 was presented to the Minister for Health in October 1985 and was finally released by the Minister in December 1986. The fieldwork was done in 1984 and the complete report was sent to Ministers in October 1985. I had to ask in the House why it had not been published before. It did not see the light of day until the week before last Christmas. That delayed report confirms the view that, for adolescents, the major drug of misuse is alcohol and that they suffer many more problems from it than from all other drugs combined.

I do not have the slightest doubt that, if the OPCS were asked to conduct similar fieldwork when the variation orders proposed in the Bill have been in operation, the findings which I am about the reveal would be greatly magnified. The survey showed that, by the age of 13, 82 per cent. of boys and 77 per cent. of girls had had their first drink. Twenty-four per cent. of boys said that they were nine or younger when they had their first drink. Among 13-year-olds, more than 26 per cent. of all boys and 17 per cent. of all girls drank alcohol on four or more days a week and 30 per cent. of boys and 38 per cent. of girls drank at least once a week.

Among 15-year-olds, 34 per cent. and 25 per cent. respectively drank on most days in the week. Of those who drank, about half the 13-year-olds drank fewer than four units of alcohol a week, which is equivalent to two pints of beer, while among the 15-year-olds half the boys and one third of the girls drank more than 10 units a week. Nearly one in five 15-year-old boys drank more than 25 units of alcohol a week. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has stated that the upper health limit for adult men should be no more than 21 units a week; so the younger generation is already drinking harder than the doctors think is satisfactory for mature adults.

Of 15-year-old drinkers, 55 per cent. of boys and 48 per cent. of girls experienced one bout of drunkenness during the year, half of them more than once. Fifteen per cent. of 13-year-old boys reported getting into arguments or fights after drinking. That proportion rises to 17 per cent. for 14-year-olds and 27 per cent. for 15-year-olds. Half of 15-year-old boys, a third of 14-year-old boys and a quarter of 13-year-old boys report falling over as a result of drinking too much. Since the adolescents were asked to report on the events in the year before the survey, the 13-year-olds were recalling events that happened when they were 12.

The OPCS report states:

"The greater the degree of social enjoyment that adolescents recalled as being associated with an evenings drinking, the more likely it was to have been followed by a disagreeable combination of sickness, incapacity and regret."

The report continues:

"Heavier drinking among the relatively small minority of adolescents who do drink heavily is not episodic or opportunist drinking, it is an established regular habit . . . Heavy drinking, including no doubt what is known in adults as problem drinking, among a minority of adolescents (even among secondary schoolchildren) is a regular commitment that forms part of their lives. It is not an occasional adventure . . . A minority of adolescents have a regular habit of heavy drinking. Some of them are still at school."

I have already produced evidence to show the anxieties of one headmistress on this subject.

The report continues:

"The more money they have the more likely they are to drink, to drink a lot, to get drunk and to get into difficulties. Only a minority go right through this process but the better off are more likely than those who have only little money to go down the path."

Those warnings should sound an alarm bell.

Under-age drinkers account for one in 14 of all drunkenness convictions — my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State knows that to be a fact. For the first time this century, 16-year-old boys are more at risk from drunkenness than middle-aged men. The rate of convictions per 100,000 of population among 16-year-olds exceeds that of the 30 to 60 age group. Between 1982 and 1985 the number of offences and cautions among 14-year-olds increased from 94 to 224, or 138 per cent.; among 15-year-olds, from 301 to 492, or 63 per cent.; and among 16-year-olds, from 1,047 to 1,538, or 47 per cent.

How in heaven's name can the Government and the nation ignore figures of that kind? God knows what we are building up for the future. This is not the first time a Licensing (Amendment) Bill has been brought before the House without any consideration having been given to the impact of its provisions on the younger generation. I had to remind the hon. Member for Carlisle that one of the campaigns in which we were engaged dealt with a Bill which—although, of course, it introduced the principle of "flexibility"—sought to permit children under 14 to enter bars unaccompanied. It too was given a Second Reading and went through Committee. But, on Report, the House of Commons suddenly tumbled to what was proposed and threw it out. We cannot go down this line again ignoring the facts.

11.15 am

While overall drunkenness offences peaked in 1980, the number of under-age drivers found guilty of drunkenness or cautioned was higher in 1985 than in 1980. Over 1,000 young people die each year in an alcohol-related accident, and so it goes on. I could say much more on that subject, but I shall not.

There is one other reason why I am reluctant to agree to the adjournment of the Bill without any promise that the break in hours will be restored. The Bill as constituted, even if it were the best Bill in the world, simply cannot be implemented without causing serious disruption for the courts. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department — the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—told us that there were serious resource problems. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has had to remind us repeatedly that there are serious resource problems. We would be acting irresponsibly, would we not, if we were to accept this motion without a clear statement that the resources necessary to implement the Bill are available? Home Office Ministers have referred to this, although not in great detail.

Let us consider how serious the matter is. In the current issue of *The Law Magazine*, which reached me only two days ago, Mr. Peter Lydiate a justices' clerk, bluntly warned:

"the traditional system of administering justice in the people's courts is now under threat".

When we are told that the administration of the magistrates courts already faces a "deepening crisis", we cannot allow the Home Office to put further pressure on the courts by seeking to implement this Bill until the courts feel that they can cope with the extra burden. Mr. Lydiate states that 310 justices clerks are responsible for a further 1,300 court clerks. Justices clerks have to be barristers or

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solicitors of at least seven years standing. Twenty five per cent. of the court clerks are also legally qualified. If the Bill ever sees the light of day, the work that it will entail must be seen in the light of the burden placed on the courts when the Crown prosecution service comes into operation—I believe it may be already in operation.

Mr. Waddington: Yes.

Sir Bernard Braine: It must be seen in the light of the burden placed on the courts since the Crown Prosecution Service came into operation. The new service was to relieve seriously stretched police departments from having to prosecute in magistrates courts. That action has already had an adverse effect on the staffing of magistrates courts, according to Mr. Lydiate. He said:

"One vast source of potential Crown Prosecutors was clearly the hundreds of barristers and solicitors employed and trained by justices' clerks to act as court clerks. . . These court clerks were targeted for recruitment as Crown Prosecutors."

Up to April last year, 21 per cent. of legally qualified court clerks left the service, many to go into prosecuting solicitors' departments. There is little doubt that this serious and dramatic trend has continued, perhaps even at a greater pace.

I must describe the reality of the situation facing our courts in order that the House might see why my argument is so important. We need to be given assurances that the Home Office will allocate more resources to the justices' clerks, in order to appoint appropriate qualified staff to meet the demands that they already face, as well as the additional work that the Bill will place upon the courts.

The Justices' Clerks Society is concerned about the length of court hearing times. This has to be spelt out because we have not been told about this burden. The society is concerned about the length of court hearing time and the additional work that will arise if the Bill is passed in its existing form. The society has estimated that each application for a variation order will last on average about 10 minutes. There are some 96,000 licensed premises in England and Wales. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Grantham—told us on Second Reading that 75 per cent. of those, or some 72,000, will apply for variation orders. On the most optimistic reckoning, 4,000 extra court sessions will be required to deal with all the applications. If such applications are opposed, we can double or treble that number.

To show how this will affect licensing districts, I will give four examples—two large districts, one medium and one small. As the Bill applies schedule 2 to the Licensing Act 1964, it follows that objectors can turn up at a hearing unannounced, thereby prolonging it by up to half an hour or even more. In Manchester, a large district, it has been estimated that if all the licensed premises were made the subject of applications for variation orders, at an average of 10 minutes, an application would require about 180 additional court hours to be accommodated within an already overburdened workload. A normal court sitting lasts three hours, which would mean an additional 60 sittings for licensing justices. If there were objections, as I believe there would be, the 60 sittings could become 120 or even 180.

In Birmingham, another large court, with 1,200 licensed premises to cater for, 200 hours will be required. This would require 66 sittings or even 200 sittings. In Medway, a medium sized court with 475 licensed premises, 78 hours, or 27 to 78 sittings would be required. In Batley, a relatively small court, catering for, say, 100 licensed premises, 16 hours, or five to 15 sittings would be required.

There are other problems. The Act currently allows for a maximum of eight licensing sessions plus brewster sessions in which to deal with the business for a licensing district. The minimum number of licensing justices prescribed by regulations is five, which in almost all areas will have to be increased to the maximum of 15 in order to cope with the burden that variation orders under the Bill would place on the courts. This will obviously create additional expenditure.

As the maximum number of justices under the existing law who can sit and take variation orders is 15, that will mean that in Manchester, which has an existing maximum of 18 half-day sittings, with an additional 60 half-day sittings per annum, justices will be sitting on 78 licensing sessions, thereby reducing their availability to deal with criminal, domestic and juvenile work. I have spelt out that impossible situation in detail to show how ridiculous and ill thought out the Bill is. The question of the resources that will be required has not even been considered. This unsatisfactory situation would worsen if hearings were lengthy because of objections to applications.

In Manchester, as I have already said, the workload would increase to 120 sessions. One could envisage a situation where licensing justices would be spending all their time in the licensing courts to the exclusion of all other work. My right hon. and learned Friend knows that the courts are already experiencing delays because qualified clerks are leaving the service. He knows that the Home Office has allowed one element of the service to compete with another, due to already inadequate finance. The courts must be adequately financed if justice is to be properly administered. The lack of adequate remuneration and the attraction of higher salaries from the Crown Prosecution Service has lured qualified clerks away from the service in their droves.

Peter Lydiate, in the article I mentioned, stated that he believes that this is deliberate poaching. He said:

"The plan was simple. Pitch the basic salaries of the new Crown Prosecutors above those fixed for clerks. This was done; it worked."

The effect of this on the magistrates courts was that large numbers of court clerks were seduced away from the magisterial service, leaving an instant vacuum which justices' clerks have been energetically trying to fill during the past year, with great difficulties. The effects already stare us in the face. As Mr. Lydiate said, many courts have been closed and the hearings of cases put off for weeks or months for want of sufficient court clerks.

Already, justices' clerks are faced with the training of new recruits. Mr. Lydiate said:

"Corrective action shows little prospect of success. It takes years to train appropriate barristers and solicitors to a level of competence."

There is no more difficult and abstruse area than licensing law. Lay magistrates need and expect expert guidance. The Justices' Clerks Society is deeply concerned that the Home Office has turned down suggestions that court clerks should be proficiently qualified barristers or solicitors. We are not matching like with like in our courts. We are opening up a minefield of case law with variation orders.

Lay justices need the best advice that can be given. Licensees, with the help of their association, will be given barristers or solicitors to argue their cases.

What Mr. Peter Lydiate said of the magistrates courts applies to the licensing courts. He went on to say:

"Magistrates courts therefore face a dark period where, in most courtrooms today, the bench of unpaid lay justices will be sitting to hear from a barrister or solicitor acting as Crown Prosecutor, a barrister or solicitor acting for the accused and their court clerk.

He will be required to give expert guidance on all that is said and done concerning law, evidence, practice and procedure, and to ensure that the justices apply correct judicial criteria to any decision."

We are not told that the Bill will be withdrawn. It is to be adjourned. It will come back at some future time. Of course, the Home Office will look at it very carefully, but there is no guarantee that the Bill will not come before us again in its present form.

The Bill is an administrative nightmare. Frankly, I cannot see that it will ever be implemented. Therefore, there will be a need to increase the maximum number of sessions and the maximum size of licensing committees to deal with the work if it ever becomes law. This would involve a change in the Licensing Act 1964, which the Bill does not deal with. The Bill cannot be implemented without amendment to that Act. That fact has only emerged from my close study of the matter.

I know that the House is not going to pass the Bill now, but how could it ever pass the Bill in its present form? We are entitled to know whether the Home Secretary will be obliged to come before Parliament with new legislation before the Bill can ever be introduced—unless my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister can tell us that the Home Secretary has the powers already. Parliament needs to know, and it has not been told. We deal in generalities with a Bill which, as I have shown, has grave social consequences. I have not mounted the entire case against the Bill as yet. I have taken particular points that cause concern. There is much more that could be said about it. It is not an innocuous little measure but a very dangerous one.

11.30 am

Indeed, even if more financial resources were found to implement the Bill, I wonder whether we are justified in pressing it upon the courts. Again, Peter Lydiate issued a warning. He said:

"Even if the coming years were to bring an increase in salaries to make them competitive with those of Crown Prosecutors, which is by no means certain, it may be too late."

In short, there will be considerable difficulty in absorbing this extra work without causing additional delays to the hearing of criminal, juvenile and domestic cases. Additional court and court clerk time will be involved, to the detriment of other more pressing work, and that is taking place at a time when recruitment and retention of suitably qualified court clerks is proving increasingly difficult.

I could go on to describe the financial consequences of all that. Whether the Government will ever find the money for it is another matter. Unless additional resources are made available, there is a great fear in the licensing world that liquor licensing work will grind to a halt because of a total inability to cope.

I believe, therefore, that the Home Office has a specific responsibility to protect the licensing justices in our constituencies. I hope that I have said enough to convince the House that the debate on the Bill should not be adjourned but that the Bill should be quietly dropped. Perhaps some day the present Government, or another, will find the courage to legislate and will grasp the fundamental truth that alcohol, with all its pleasant associations for most of us, is not like other commodities. Its sale must be regulated if the harm it can cause is not to continue to grow as at present.

I believe that the public will support sensible alcohol control policies. Once the public are told the facts and given a lead — the drink-driving campaign, seat belt legislation and tobacco tax are good examples — I believe that there will be an acceptance of sensible counter policies.

Above all, when the Government are faced with the choice—I address myself particularly to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister—between the politics of wealth creation—a course which increases the profits of the drink trade — and the politics of health, they would do well to remember the wise counsel of one of our greatest Conservative Prime Ministers, Benjamin Disraeli, who said that

"the first priority of Government is the health of the people."

It still is.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): It is appropriate for me to start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). One thing is certain; as a result of his deciding to present this Bill to the House we have had a series of interesting debates when right hon. and hon. Members have been able to ventilate their views, not on the precise terms of the Bill but on the danger of excessive consumption of alcohol, the danger to young people, and all those important social issues.

I am sure that my hon. Friend would wish me to thank my officials in the Home Office on his behalf. Few members of the public realise how much work is done within Government Departments to help private Members with their Bills. My officials certainly gave a great deal of help to my hon. Friend, pointing out to him that it was essential, if his Bill was to make any progress, that he should address his mind, for instance, to the resource implications. Of course, it is no secret that my officials drafted amendments for him to try to mitigate some of the resource problems that would obviously arise from the Bill as originally drafted. Therefore, I thank my officials for their help in that regard.

It was pleasing to see the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) here this morning. I, among many, am sorry to see him go and that this is his last Parliament. My memories of Carlisle are somewhat mixed, having spent my first days in the Army there, not all of which were entirely delightful. However, I have delighted in my acquaintance with the hon. Member, as has my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine).

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point said that he was not opposed to more flexible hours. He said he was opposed only to an extension of the total number of hours. That plain statement of his views is welcome. The public think that there should be reform of our licensing laws. I think that the public think that there should be a measured relaxation of the present restrictions. I think that they will be convinced by the evidence from Scotland that greater availability — by that I mean relaxation of restrictions of hours and licensees being able to decide for

[Mr. David Waddington]

themselves whether they should open in the afternoon—does not necessarily mean higher consumption. The sort of dire consequences that were forecast after the liberalisation took place in Scotland in 1976 simply have not occurred.

My right hon. Friend pointed to the mischief that can be caused by excessive consumption of alcohol. None of us need to be convinced of that. My right hon. Friend pointed to the dangers to young people of consuming too much alcohol. None of us doubts that alcohol misuse is a serious problem in Britain and none of us doubts that there is too much drinking by too many young people. However, that is not the question to which we have to address our minds on this Bill. The question is whether that problem, which all of us acknowledge, would be made worse by a modest relaxation in licensing hours. The truth is that there is no evidence that it would.

I dealt with the evidence, or lack of evidence, in the most interesting debate on licensing reform and alcohol abuse initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on 27 February. I pointed out that the

"basic conclusion of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report was that the relaxations in Scotland have led to more leisurely and responsible drinking. The study shows that between 1976 and 1984 there has been an increase in the consumption of alcohol by women, but no significant increase in consumption by men. Alcohol Concern has suggested that the fact of there being no change in men's drinking may be accounted for in part by unemployment, which is one of the points canvassed by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow."

I pointed out that that was entirely unrealistic because

"If unemployment was a factor, one might have expected it to affect women as well, and I think that it is fair to assume that drinking by women has gone up in Scotland because of the more relaxed social attitudes to drinking by women."
—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1987; Vol. 111, c. 525.]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point went on to point out the relationship between alcohol and crime. We all know that. Anyone who has practised in the courts well knows that there is all too close a relationship between alcohol consumption and crime. The question, however, is whether that has anything to do with a modest relaxation in licensing hours allowing licensees more choice as to the hours for which they open.

On 27 February I said that the statistics for offences involving alcohol consumption must be considered with a great deal of caution and that some changes in trends might be accounted for merely by changes in police policy. One cannot simply point to a smaller increase in a particular offence in Scotland compared with England and say that that proves the point. I went on to point out that opponents of change could find no comfort in Scotland because there had been a dramatic fall in drunkenness offences, and drink driving offences had increased nothing like so fast as in England and Wales. With respect to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, therefore, it is difficult to sustain the argument that drink driving offences will increase in England following the same modest relaxation in licensing hours as has occurred in Scotland.

We must not lose sight of the ball. We are not discussing the dangers of drink. We are considering whether a modest relaxation in the law such as that which has taken place in Scotland would lead to the dire social consequences suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. In my view, it is almost impossible even to begin to mount an argument to that effect, bearing mind that none of those dire consequences has occurred in Scotland.

Sir Bernard Braine: Is it really so impossible? My right hon. and learned Friend recognises the connection between alcohol and crime and I have given him incontrovertible evidence that under-age drinking, from the age of 13 upwards, is increasing in public houses, as is the harm that it causes through the link it has with public disorder and criminal offences. That is all taking place illegally now. If my right hon. and learned Friend cannot cope with an illegal situation of such gravity now, how can he suggest that relaxing matters still more and allowing longer drinking hours will not exacerbate the problem? It certainly will not make it any better. Why does my right hon. and learned Friend run away from that?

11.45 am

Mr. Waddington: If it is all happening illegally already, what on earth does it have to do with the Bill? As I have said, it is impossible to find statistics showing that there has been a worsening of the situation in Scotland as a result of the relaxation. I do not accept all that my right hon. Friend has said because I believe that the vast majority of licensees are extremely responsible people who do their level best to conduct their houses properly and to prevent under-age drinking, but the fact that there is such a problem in England today does not begin to be an argument about extending to England some of the changes that took place in Scotland in 1976.

Lastly, my right hon. Friend said that the Bill raised serious resource problems. He is entirely right. That is why we advised my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood as to how some of the deleterious effects of the Bill could be mitigated and that is why he tabled amendment No. 40. That amendment would have mitigated some of the deleterious effects, but it would not have solved the problems, and I have pointed out throughout our deliberations that his is not the scheme of reform that the Government would have recommended to the House. In the light of that, the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point in seeking assurances that the Home Office would allocate additional resources to deal with the Bill if it became law seem somewhat unrealistic. That is a problem that we should have to consider if a miracle occurred, but as miracles do not occur very often my right hon. Friend will allow me to suggest that we can consider that matter if and when a miracle occurs.

Mr. Dubs: First, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) who suggested that his brief contribution to this debate might be his last in the House. Members in all parts of the House will be sorry to know that this is his last Parliament as he has earned the respect of the whole House for his contribution to its work and I am sure that he will be sadly missed.

In considering the motion before us, it is helpful to consider what has happened during the passage of the Bill thus far. Two approaches could have been adopted. The first is an overall approach considering all the problems related to alcohol and its abuse—licensing hours, health measures, preventive measures, drink-driving, and so on. Such an approach would require a Government measure

because it is too complicated for a private Member's Bill. Had there been such an overall approach—I am sure that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and the promoter of the Bill would both subscribe to this—we might have approached the measure with more agreement than has been achieved so far. That would also have been my own preferred approach, but that was not the position in which we found outselves when the Bill was introduced.

I think that the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has been a Member of Parliament longer than I have, so I do not wish to seem to speak from greater experience, but I suspect that if he had been a little more modest and confined himself to a rather simpler measure it might have got further. A simpler measure would have involved flexibility within the present overall limit of opening hours. Such a measure would have achieved the main aim of flexibility and the hon. Member for Eastwood would have had the support of the House on that point. Instead of discussing a motion to adjourn further debate, we might have been congratulating him on steering the Bill on to the statute book. If there is ever a lesson to learn from private Members' Bills, it is that they should be kept as simple and as uncontroversial as possible. I would have supported a move towards flexibility, but I would have preferred that to be in the context of a nine and a half hour day and no longer. That would have enabled us to make a little progress and to judge the consequences of flexibility without running the risk of all the dangers that the right hon. Member for Castle Point described so eloquently this morning and on other occasions.

I regret that the Bill was not drafted in that way. If it had been so drafted, it would have represented sensible progress without the risks and dangers that the measure has aroused in the minds of some hon. Members. There is no doubt that alcohol is lethal. If alcohol was a new product which was not yet legal and we were debating whether to make it legal, not one hon. Member would vote to make it legal if we had any idea of the consequences of alcohol in our society. We are not in that position. It is clear that alcohol is the most widely used drug and intoxicant in the world. Therefore, it is unrealistic to ask whether we can ban it. We must find a compromise for those people who derive pleasure from alcohol—I admit that I am a modest drinker and derive a little pleasure from it—and so prevent some of the worst consequences of alcohol. That is the challenge and that will continue to be the challenge for this House when legislation on this matter is introduced in future.

We are all concerned about drinking and driving, the effects of alcohol on young drinkers and the effect of alcohol on the health of many people in this country. So many people are in hospital because they have had too much to drink. We must achieve a balance between the pleasure that alcohol gives to many people and the enormous harm that it can cause. We must arrive at that balance in our legislation. I wish that the hon. Member who sponsored the Bill had been more modest and had drafted the Bill in the way that I have suggested.

I want to pay a tribute to the right hon. Member for Castle Point. He has displayed tenacity and determination and has probably single-handedly—although there was other support for him—in Committee and in the House prevented the passage of the Bill. He has shown energy, attention to detail, commitment and anger about the consequences of alcohol and that has impressed all hon. Members. I pay that tribute across the party political divide and I am sure that he understands the reason for that tribute.

However, I am a little puzzled as to why the promoter of the Bill is seeking to adjourn the debate. The hon. Member for Eastwood paid me the courtesy of telling me in advance of today's sitting of his intention. I do not want to challenge his motives. However, I am rather puzzled about this. I have expressed some reservations about the contents of the Bill while supporting the principle of flexibility. I believe that the hon. Member for Eastwood said that reform was inevitable. At least, that was mentioned by someone in the House and I think that it was mentioned by the hon. Member for Eastwood.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I said that as a statement of belief. Of course, I believe that reform is inevitable. I want to make that point clear.

Mr. Dubs: It was a statement of his belief that reform is inevitable. I am therefore puzzled as to why he is calling a halt to the debate now. Whether or not we agree that the hon. Gentleman would have failed in his attempt to get the Bill through its remaining stages this afternoon, if he believes that reform is inevitable, he could have used today's debates as an opportunity to put down a marker for the future. After all, we all know that one of the purposes of private Member's Bills is to put down markers for the future, and the vast majority of private Member's Bills are tabled for that purpose, not in the hope of their reaching the statute book. He would have put down a better marker for the future if he had continued with the Bill today, thereby showing his determination, commitment and attitude to further amendments which he might have been disposed to accept. In future, if a Government or private Member tries to legislate in this area, that further information from the rest of today's debate might well have been helpful.

Mr. Ron Lewis: My hon. Friend is arguing about why the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) should continue with his Bill. Although some of those who supported the Bill knew that the hon. Gentleman would move the motion, would not my hon. Friend have thought that it was their duty to be with him here right to the end?

Mr. Dubs: I would have thought so. I thank my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to that.

Where there is a difference of opinion in the House on private Members' legislation, those who are most tenacious tend to win the day. There is a contrast between the tenacity of the right hon. Member for Castle Point and the attitude of some of the supporters of the hon. Member for Eastwood. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Eastwood told us earlier today that he had written to his hon. Friends saying that they should not bother to turn up because he would seek to adjourn the debate. Nevertheless, I should have thought that the House and, indeed, the public, would look at hon. Members' commitment when they judge what is going on in the House, not just the words that are spoken. There is nobody more tenacious than the right hon. Member for Castle Point.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle has come back to the Chamber. He missed the tribute that I paid to him. All Members of the House are sorry that this is his last Parliament. Indeed, that may have

[Mr. Dubs]

been his last intervention—I hope not. We have more time next week, and perhaps even longer. My hon. Friend has earned the respect of all hon. Members for the contribution that he has made, his commitment and his dedication to his beliefs. He will be very much missed, but we all wish him a long and happy retirement——

Mr. Waddington: As the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) would point out, the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) also missed what I had to say about him, which was also kindly.

Mr. Dubs: My hon. Friend has now had the embarrassment of listening to our tributes, and he can read them twice over in *Hansard* on Monday. I have not been in the House all that long, but I know that it is always sad when one's colleagues decide that they will stand no longer. They are missed. I want my hon. Friend to know that.

I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend took all the trouble to come here today. After all, many other people did not. I know that he is concerned about the Bill. After he campaigned in Carlisle yesterday in the local elections, the fact that he took the trouble to come here simply to be present is a further sign of his dedication and commitment. I hope that his successor notes that and takes a leaf out of his book.

I am puzzled because I should have thought that it would be helpful to the future deliberations of the House if we had the benefit of debating the Bill for the rest of the day. I am disappointed that we have not had that opportunity.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I repeat the point that I made when moving the motion: this procedure enables other private Members to have an opportunity to put a case to the House, with which I may or may not agree. That principle is important, too.

Mr. Dubs: That is an interesting point, which I shall come to later. I had assumed that that would be one of the hon. Gentleman's motives, but I shall consider the others first because it is important. His first argument was that he thought that he could not get the Bill through all its stages today. Implicit in what he said—he may have said it explicitly—was the view not only that he could not get the Bill through today, but that if there were no election, there would be no chance of getting his Bill through by October, which normally would be the end of the parliamentary Session. So the hon. Gentleman let his supporters go and he gave up his opportunity.

I am surprised at that because the other day I was on the Standing Committee dealing with the Obscene Publications Bill. The promoter of the Bill was determined —he failed—to try to get his Bill to the Floor of the House for the final day when the Report stage of private Members' Bills takes precedence so that they have a chance of becoming law.

Mr. Stewart: I do not want to extend this argument, but this is the last day, other than 3 July, on which private Members' Bills can be considered on Report and on Third Reading. Given that, if a private Members' Bill does not get through the House today, it clearly cannot go through another place and be back for consideration on 3 July which is the last day available for private Members' Bills.

Mr. Dubs: I understand that, but I should have thought that that would have been an argument for continuing until 2.30 pm today, rather than giving up at 10.30 pm, if there is commitment to the legislation. This is an important point of principle because private Members' time is limited and is a valuable commodity. Members fight hard to get a share of the time that is available on the Floor of the House for putting forward their own ideas and Bills. Therefore, to give in quite so easily makes me wonder, but I have already covered that. I understand that this is the last day for the Report stage, but that suggests to me that the hon. Gentleman might have shown more determination than he did.

12 noon

The hon. Gentleman hinted that he does not believe that there will be an October in this parliamentary Session or that there will not even be a Friday next in this Session. We are all aware that this may well be the last private Members' Friday before the general election — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman throws his hands up as if to say that he does not know, but perhaps he does know. However, I wonder whether it is right for a Member of this House—of course I accept that the decision must be his—to decide that he will not pursue a private Member's Bill merely because an election might be called on Monday or Tuesday. We have had an election hanging over us for some little while now and there will be other occasions when an election dangles over the House and the country. We should not stop work and forget our responsibilities simply because we think that an election may be called. The hon. Gentleman may have been influenced by the results of yesterday's local elections. However, I believe that he made his decision yesterday evening before any of us had access to those local election results.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Yes, I did.

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Gentleman says, yes. Nevertheless, one should not take as a forgone conclusion what the Prime Minister will decide. I cannot help thinking that it might have been a better tactic if the hon. Gentleman had continued until 2.30 pm.

My last argument, to which the hon. Gentleman gave weight because he intervened on it a moment ago, is that he wants to give an opportunity this afternoon for other Bills to be considered. He said that it would be a generous gesture on his part to allow other legislation to be debated and that that is why he is seeking to adjourn his own. According to today's Order Paper, about 21 other private Members' Bills are waiting to be discussed when we have disposed of the Licensing (Amendment) Bill. I wonder which of those Bills he is seeking to favour because clearly he is giving up his time for the sake of another measure. Therefore, I am looking with some interest at the other Bills to see which the hon. Gentleman wishes to speed on its way.

Mr. Stewart: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not draw any implications from the fact that well down the Order Paper is a ten-minute Bill, which is in my name. I hope that he will not suggest that.

Mr. Dubs: Of course, I should not do any such thing. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was simply casting my eye down the list of the Bills that are waiting to be debated today. Every one of those Bills stands less chance

of becoming law than the hon. Gentleman's Bill. Virtually all await Second Reading debates or are adjourned debates on Second Reading, so they all have further to go to reach the statute book.

The Tobacco Smoking (Public Places) Bill is an important measure and would add significantly to the health of the nation. If I thought that it had a chance of becoming law I would sit down. Clearly, I would wish to speed it on its way. However, we may not reach it because the Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill *[Lords]* comes next. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman thinks that it will be disposed of quickly so that we can reach the Tobacco Smoking (Public Places) Bill.

The Tobacco Smoking (Public Places) Bill will help to decrease the amount of smoking. The effect of smoking on non-smokers is damaging to their health and can be lessened by having a legislative basis for reducing smoking in public places. As a non-smoker I should like to see that Bill on the statute book. Indeed, I suspect that most hon. Members would happily jump over the second item of business—I know that our procedures do not allow for that—to the third because we would be helping the health of the nation.

The fourth item of business is the Coal Mining Subsidence Bill and, clearly, the hon. Gentleman wants that measure, standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), to reach the statute book.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I appreciate the difficulties that we have today, but I would be pleased if we could reach that Bill. It affects many constituencies and Members of Parliament as the problem of coal mining subsidence stretches from the north into Scotland, part of which the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) represents. It is an important Bill and a tragedy that we shall not reach it. The National Coal Board has dealt unfairly with many people, particularly some of my constituents.

Mr. Dubs: I thank my hon. Friend for explaining that and I share his view that it is an important Bill. If I thought that by adjourning this debate there was a chance of discussing the Coal Mining Subsidence Bill and quickly passing it into law, I would not waste a moment by drawing the attention of the House to its importance. I would want to get on and discuss it.

Such are the pressures of a private Members' day that, clearly, we shall not reach that measure. My hon. Friend will have to reintroduce it after the general election, when there will be far more support from the Government for it because we shall be sitting on the Government Benches. It will either be a private Member's Bill with Government support or, even, a Government measure. It is a sign of the usefulness and dedication of my hon. Friend that he seeks to do this. The hon. Member for Eastwood has not said whether he supports the Bill, but I suggest that he is sympathetic to it or at least does not want to delay it.

I do not want to take the time of the House by going through every Bill on the Order Paper, tempting though it is. Clearly, they all have a part to play. However, it is worth saying a little about one or two of them. One of the Bills——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are debating whether the discussion on the Licensing (Amendment) Bill should be adjourned. While the hon. Gentleman may refer to the other Bills as being a motive for the adjournment of this debate, he must not discuss them in detail.

Mr. Dubs: I certainly would not want to do that. The hon. Member for Eastwood said that one of his motives in seeking to persuade the House to adjourn this debate was that other Bills were waiting to be discussed. He did not say which Bill he favoured and I am seeking to tempt him to hint which one it is, without debating the other Bills, so that we may know his other motives. That would help us to judge whether we should adjourn now or decline to adjourn and continue discussing the amendments to the hon. Gentleman's Bill. So far I have not been successful in tempting him to give us a hint, but if we did do that we would be clear about the matter.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am puzzled about why the hon. Gentleman is pursuing this theme. I did not seek to favour any Bill on the Order Paper but was simply making the point that adjournment of this Bill would give other hon. Members an opportunity to speak. That is what happened when I sat down at nine minutes past two o'clock on Second Reading. That gave to his hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) an opportunity to have a say, although I disagreed with the measure put forward by the hon. Member for Leyton.

Mr. Dubs: Nobody could quarrel with that as a statement of willingness to give way to other hon. Members who wish to put forward other measures. The Housebuyers' Protection Bill stands in my name and some time ago I introduced it by leave of the House. I would be less than human if I did not make a passing reference to this important piece of legislation. Much to my surprise, Government Whips blocked it on a previous Friday. I would have thought that the Government Whips would want to encourage protection for housebuyers and would want to find time to debate this simple and modest measure. Even at this stage, I hope that they will decide to let the measure go through as a sign of their commitment to people who are seeking to buy houses and need consumer protection in the process of so doing.

I shall not test this further by going through the Bills that we might reach today. I have commended my own Bill and achieved one of my purposes.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee,) to be further considered on Friday 3 July.

Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill [Lords]

Considered in Committee.

Clause 1

AMENDMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1986

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

12.13 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Would it be in order, Mr. Armstrong, to speak on the Bill as a whole?

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Certainly the hon. Lady may do that. The Bill has only two clauses.

Dame Jill Knight: This Bill came into being for a very good reason. It has not come into being because there have been vague suspicions that all is not well about the teaching of sex in our schools. It is before the Committee because there is evidence in shocking abundance that children in our schools, some as young as five years, are frequently being encouraged into homosexuality and lesbianism. That is happening in our schools, is being paid for out of rates, and is against the wishes of the children's parents.

For those reasons, and because of the abundance of evidence, the Bill was introduced in another place where, of course, it has gone through all its stages. It gained unqualified acceptance from all sides and all political parties in the other place.

As I have said, there are many pieces of evidence as reasons for this Bill. I shall quote only a few examples. First, there is a publication called "The Playbook for Kids about Sex". It is written for young children and is presented in the type of colour and line drawings that would appeal to a child. In fact, it is the most frightening piece of propaganda against children. There is also a book called "The Milkman's on his Way". I shall not shock the House by quoting from it, but, in explicit terms, it describes intercourse between a 16-year-old boy and his adult male homosexual lover. The book glorifies homosexuality and encourages youngsters to believe that it is better than any other sexual way of life.

Recently, the lesbian and gay development unit of Haringey council made a video called "How to become a lesbian in 35 minutes". Under the aegis of the council, it was shown to mentally handicapped girls, of whom one was aged 18, one was aged 16, and the others were much younger. Another book is being promulgated by a local council. It is called "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin". That book has been the subject of a great deal of public protest. It pictures a little girl of about six in bed with her father and his lover, both of whom are naked. It is a picture storybook, aimed at six to eight-year-olds, and is made available by education officials in and for junior schools. There was a great outcry. Anyone who would oppose the Bill should read that book and consider how they feel about it. It tells youngsters:

"Jenny is a little girl. Martin is Jenny's dad and Eric is Martin's lover. They all live happily together."

Eric draws Jenny a series of cartoons of two men saying: "I love you, Fred. 'I love you too, Bill.' Why don't we move in together? 'That is a good idea.'"

It is terrifying to me that local councils have been promoting that kind of stuff. I could give the House many examples, but I shall not go on. There is a pile of filth, and it is shocking when one considers that it is all paid for by the rates. What is the aim?

Today, one or two of us are thinking about manifestos. I shall not go into the reason why, but certainly we are doing so. I look no further than the gay liberation front manifesto to find the reasons for such stuff appearing before our children and being promulgated and proselytised to them. The gay liberation front manifesto states:

"We must fight for something more than reform. We must aim at the abolition of the family. This will benefit all women and gays."

We could argue for some time about how true it is that the abolition of the family would help women, but it is debatable whether it would be anything other than a disaster for the country.

It is important that the House should understand that the Bill in no way attacks the rights of adult people to live their own lives in their own way. It is a free country. Many homosexuals live their lives totally within the law and would no more think of molesting little boys than a normal heterosexual would think of molesting little girls. Nothing in the Bill is aimed at such people. There is all the difference in the world between allowing adults to live in the way in which they consider is right for them and trying to pervert little children.

I remember the occasion many years ago when we were first presented with a Bill on homosexuality and the rights of homosexuals. The debate was joined as to whether homosexuals were born or made. An elderly gentleman who had been a colonel in the Indian army told me that it was his belief that homosexuals were made if enough influence was exerted upon them. He said that in the hill country and in parts of Poona, when he was in the Indian army, drummer boys used to be sent out from England —they were often orphans—and sent up to the forward areas to the regiments. He said—I have never forgotten this—that not one of those children had a chance. They all ended up as homosexuals because of the life they were forced to lead. I find it outrageous that little children should have been perverted in that way.

Those in another place and millions outside Parliament object to little children being perverted, diverted or converted from normal family life to a lifestyle which is desperately dangerous for society and extremely dangerous for them. Any venereologist will say that syphilis, gonorrhoea and genital herpes are characteristically infections of homosexuals. If that were not enough, we now have the terror of AIDS. Very few hon. Members fail to appreciate the seriousness of the danger that AIDS presents to the whole of our society, yet some of that which is being taught to children in our schools would undoubtedly lead to a great spread of AIDS. Even the knowledge of the danger of AIDS has not stopped the promoting of homosexuality among little children.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The hon. Lady has suggested that the whole of our society is in danger from AIDS — homosexuals and heterosexuals. There is evidence in some countries of an increasingly wide spread of AIDS among the heterosexual population, and I do not

understand why she is dwelling on homosexuality. It seems that in the end AIDS will affect all people in about the same way.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman's intervention suggests that he has not done his homework on AIDS. The disease spreads into ordinary heterosexual members of society through contact with those who have had AIDS, and I think that 95 per cent. of those who start AIDS come from the homosexual section. It is from that section that the danger of AIDS has come, and within that section the danger is infinitely more severe than in any other. That is where it started, and I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman, who has a serious regard for morality and good behaviour in life, can fail to appreciate that little children as young as five years of age in our schools ought not to be taught that homosexuality is a normal way of life. It is undoubtedly true that the desperate disease of AIDS starts with and comes mainly from homosexuals.

Mr. Dubs: It is my understanding that the danger of AIDS is now faced equally by both the heterosexual and homosexual sections of the population, and that there are certain countries where heterosexuals have been as affected by AIDS as homosexuals. I am talking about medical opinion on the likely way in which AIDS will spread in future, unless the spread of this dreadful disease is checked. It is misleading to suggest that the link between AIDS and homosexuality is such that there is not the likelihood of an equivalent link between AIDS and heterosexuality.

Dame Jill Knight: I must urge the hon. Gentleman to look into the subject with rather more care than he has obviously done so far. If he asks any of the eminent doctors in London—let alone outside London—who are experts on the subject, he will find that AIDS starts among homosexuals, and that they pose the greatest danger. The disease spreads to others when a homosexual with AIDS has relations with a woman, or gives tainted blood that has not been screened. We know of that danger from other countries.

The hon. Gentleman must not try to hold up our proceedings. He may be seeking information on the matter, but I must tell him, with the greatest courtesy, that at present he is not very well informed on it. Any doctor who has specialised in the subject would say, "For God's sake, do not promote homosexuality as a way of life. It is desperately dangerous."

Let me return to my main theme. The proselytising in schools of a homosexual society is all paid for by the ratepayers, 99 per cent. of whom strongly object to their money being used in that way. Parents' associations have been set up: the Parents Action Group has been particularly active. Nearly a year ago, a deputation from the group went to protest to the deputy leader of a local council that the policy discriminated against religious beliefs. The deputation included people with a wide range of religions—for instance, Catholics and Muslims—and some with no religion. They were told that the Koran needed updating, and that the Bible should be rewritten. What a thing to tell parents who are anxious about what is happening to their children. Further, a member of the gay and lesbian sub-committee of the council told the group that "parents do not know what is in the best interests of their children . . . we do." Some of the doctors do, too.

Let me add in passing that teachers who have protested strongly at what they have been asked to do have been discriminated against and intimidated in the most frightening manner. That worries me as well.

Hundreds of thousands of pounds are being spent by some councils in promoting homosexuality in our schools. All of that money could be far better spent. I am not talking about boroughs in which no council houses need repairing, and nothing needs to be done about the roads; I am not talking about councils that have examined everything in their remit and have concluded that there is nothing else on which to spend their money. Every penny of the money spent on promoting homosexuality could and should be far better spent elsewhere, and it bothers me to learn that parents and ratepayers who have gone to protest have on some occasions been physically attacked.

This is a very short Bill, with one main clause and four subsections. Subsection (1) prevents a local authority from giving "financial or other assistance" to any person for the purpose of publishing or promoting homosexuality as an acceptable family relationship, or for the purpose of teaching such acceptability in any maintained school. Hon. Members should note the words "other assistance". The other assistance would cover the provision of local authority premises for a guest speaker or the financing of conferences to get over the homosexuality message to six-year-olds. Anything of that kind would be banned by the Bill.

12.30 pm

Subsection (2) provides that a breach of subsection (1) shall be dealt with in the civil courts, and subsection (3) identifies those who may institute proceedings under subsection (2). They are given locus standi. Subsection (4) sensibly excuses a local authority if it has taken reasonable steps to ensure compliance with the law but its instructions have been ignored.

Clause 2 relates to the short title. It provides that the Bill will not apply to Northern Ireland.

The Bill has completed all its stages in another place and support for it came from right across the political spectrum. The Earl of Halsbury, who introduced the Bill, was supported by the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Longford, Lord Campbell of Alloway, Lord Denning and Lord Bellwin. They feel that the Bill should be enacted as it stands as it would put a stop to the iniquitous corruption of children. I thank all those who have helped in various ways to frame the Bill. Not thousands but millions of people of all parties and of none have said that they support the Bill. I hope that the House will bless it and will pass it.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I am glad to take this opportunity to congratulate my kinsman the Earl of Halsbury on his clear discernment of the public mind on an important moral issue. We owe him gratitude and praise for carrying this Bill through all its stages in the other place.

We live in an age of doubt. Many moral certainties of Victorian times and the orthodox Christian traditions of earlier generations are being questioned, openly challenged and quite often publicly flouted. Everyone should approach moral questions with humility. The Greeks gave us the injunction—"Know thyself."—at the same time as they originated our democratic culture. How many people can claim truthfully to have attained full self-knowledge? The road to self-knowledge often takes us

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

through stony places. Many of our moral beliefs originated with the teaching of the Greek thinkers. Our own Christian testament was written in Greek, yet homosexuality was not always condemned in classical Greece.

The whole subject remains a source of difficulty and uncertainty in the consciences of a number of people—including, as I know, an element among my constituents in Kensington. But it is an obvious fact that a man's physique shows rudimentary female characteristics, and I think that few men would claim to be entirely devoid of qualities that we associate primarily with the feminine virtues. Few women, I think, would wish to be entirely without any element of manliness. Indeed, some of the grandest figures in history and the most influential personalties of today have a broad sexual orientation.

I should like, however, to make two points very strongly in support of the intentions of the Bill. First, the physical processes of generation can be fertile or they can be morbid and fruitless. It is repugnant to the majority of people to see the endowments of our bodies, which enable us to recreate our own likeness and to perpetuate human life, turned into useless or unnatural channels. They are not happy, although they are prepared to accept, that such practices take place in privacy. They certainly are not prepared to endorse the policies of certain elements on local councils, such as ILEA or some outer London boroughs, that homosexuality should be presented openly, and even authoritatively recommended, with the support of public funds.

Secondly, on a more general constitutional consideration, it has become increasingly widely held since the 16th and 17th century wars of religion that the political organs of the state should not seek to govern or to interfere with the freedom of private conscience. In parenthesis, as we move into a post-Socialist political framework, we are coming, I think increasingly to accept that it is not permissible for political figures to intrude themselves into industry or the workings of the economy either. But it is not generally acceptable now that the state should devote substantial efforts and resources to the dissemination even of the tenets of faith, or the enforcement of codes of personal conduct in private, which enjoy majority support. It is certainly quite inadmissible that a small, unrepresentative group should capture control of a local authority and then divert its resources to the promotion of highly controversial minority points of private belief and conduct within families.

In London many parents — I believe the great majority — are deeply opposed to the promotion of homosexuality in education and will warmly support the Bill. I am proud that it was on my motion last week that the Bill obtained its Second Reading, and I trust that it will now successfully go through its remaining stages in this honourable House.

The Minister for Local Government (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I have listened carefully to my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). I have also read the debates in another place where the Bill received support from all quarters and there were no Divisions at any stage.

As is usual with Bills brought in or taken up by a private Member, I intervene to make clear the Government's view of the Bill. As many hon. Members know, the Government's views of the Bill have, from time to time, been misrepresented. Many of those who have written to hon. Members, whose letters have been drawn to my attention and the attention of other Ministers in the Department of the Environment by those hon. Members, have thought that the Government are opposed to this Bill. That is certainly not the case. Bills brought in by private Members or, as in this case, private Peers, fall into a number of categories. Some embody a policy which is totally alien to that of the Government, and those we must oppose and advise hon. Members to vote against. Others reflect Government policy, and may even have been suggested by the Government. Those, of course, we support. Others may reflect the Government's views, but be on a subject about which the Government think that it is for Parliament to make up its own mind. Others may be in harmony with the Government's views but perhaps not deal with the matter as the Government would think most appropriate.

It is into this last category that this Bill fell when it was introduced. There can be no doubt that every Minister who has been involved with the Bill strongly supports its aim, encapsulated in its long title

"A Bill intituled. An Act to restrain local authorities from promoting homosexuality".

The whole country owes the noble earl Lord Halsbury and his colleagues a debt of gratitude for bringing forward the legislation and ensuring that the topic stays in the front of public debate.

At the outset of the debate in the other place, my noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale made it clear that the Government have every sympathy with the aims underlying the proposals in this Bill. I re-emphasise in this House that sympathy. The Government share the view that a society is defined by its shared beliefs and habits. There are some kinds of behaviour that Christian charity may lead us to tolerate, but that is no reason why public funds should be spent on promoting that behaviour and no reason why we should tolerate those who spend public funds in that way. Undermining the common standards of society, flaunting behaviour that the overwhelming majority of those brought up in this country and in its traditions find revolting, unsettling the minds of the coming generation is one way — a subtle way — of changing the society in which we live.

All of us have noticed in recent years an attack on the institution of the family, which is the basic building block of society. A society that turns its back on the family and undermines it in any way will pay heavy penalties in the future. One understands that certain people are born with different interests — I put it as gently as I can. I am certainly not one of those who would wish there to be any persecution of those individuals. I do not think that any hon. Member wishes that. The Bill opposes the positive images of lesbianism and homosexuality, as though they were alternative ways of life that should be shown to all children in schools. Those images imply that one can say to children that they can live in a family with a mother and father, but there is an alternative way of life which is just as reputable, in which one lives with a person of one's own sex, and the two are equal. That could undermine the basis

of our society. The vast majority of parents, irrespective of how they voted yesterday or of how they will vote in a general election, feel intensely about this matter.

One could say that the positive promotion of the images of lesbianism and male homosexuality as though they are equivalent to family life could bring death in one generation. I am not referring to AIDS. I am talking about death in a generation, because there is no future in it—it is the end of creation. Any society that is concerned for its future in every way and for its continuation must have a clear view about what it is doing.

I am sure that we are all alarmed about many things that have been going on. My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston referred to this. Baroness Cox, who lived until recently in my constituency, said on Second Reading:

"I was speaking to teachers in Manchester on Saturday and was assured that similar policies are being pursued in parts of the North of England. This should not surprise us."

She referred to the book "Tackling Heterosexism". I have seen that book, but could not lay my hands on it for this debate. I shall provide the book for any hon. Members who would like to see it, because I was horrified by what I saw.

Baroness Cox said that the book has

"been brought out by nine London boroughs, recommends that the Inner London Education Authority and other local education authorities should:

'put resources into developing materials and changing curricula in order effectively to challenge heterosexism in lessons at all stages in the education system from primary school up to colleges of further education and that a variety of materials be developed, for example videos for use in lessons which would raise the issues of heterosexism and present Lesbians in a positive light . . . *[and that]* heterosexism awareness training courses should be introduced as a compulsory part of in-service training and during teacher training programmes'."

Baroness Cox said:

"In places such as Brent"—

a place in the British Isles that I know very well—

"those who do not pass such courses are to be debarred from sitting on appointments panels, and the implications of that for future appointments are self-evident; namely, that successful candidates in the future will have to be ideologically correct and have the appropriate sexual attitudes." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 December 1986; Vol. 483, c. 320-21.]

Recently, I was approached in my constituency by parents of all political parties about a document in Brent libraries—"Out in Brent"—which I have with me. It uses a definition that differs from the one that we would have used five or 10 years ago. There are lists of homosexual and lesbian literature; the book was easily available on the lower library shelves and children were picking it up. The name of one library was given to me and many people wrote to me about the matter. I took up the matter. Parents were concerned, irrespective of where they stood on the political platform.

I quote again from a letter printed last year in the *Daily Telegraph* by somebody who had before her ILEA's book "Secondary Issues?" which is also available to hon. Members. It is distributed to schools and purports to deal with equality of opportunity in secondary education. The letter says:

"In the section on school libraries it enthuses 'We have included lesbian and gay contact phone numbers on wall charts giving general advice, produced book lists, and we have positively included work on lesbian and gay people in library worksheets.'"

I draw the following to the attention of hon. Members. The letter in the *Daily Telegraph* says:

"The book notes with approval the removal of a section on romance from a school library".

There is no romance in these sad days, according to how some people would like us to live. ILEA replaced the section on romance

"with a section on 'relationships'—'encompassing lesbian and gay relationships, heterosexual relationships and family relationships.' Organisations listed for schools to contact include a 'Gay Teachers Group'."

12.45 pm

I have other letters, including one to the Prime Minister from another borough in London. I will not delay the House further by referring to other material, except to refer to an advertisement in Haringey's publication "Job Search" that promised preferential treatment for gays and lesbians seeking jobs as play group assistants looking after 5 to 11-year-olds. I remember reading last year that in that borough parents, again from parties of all political views, closed a school for a day because they objected to what was proposed in this type of teaching.

It is wrong for public funds to be used to promote homosexuality as an alternative to the family way of life. It does not follow from that that it is automatically right to invoke the law to prevent local authorities from using public funds in this way. The defenders of those aberrant local authorities will be quick to point out that they are elected, that they are responsible to their electorate, and that the electorate can turn out the members who support practices of which they disapprove. That is true, but it does not mean that Parliament should stand by and do nothing.

Hon. Members will know of my interest in 19th-century local government. Before the reform era in the 1830s, local authorities quite often used their powers to line the pockets of their members. In the Municipal Corporations Act 1835, Parliament did not stand by and leave it to the voters. Our predecessors took effective steps to outlaw such practices. It is for Parliament to define the area of action for local authorities. There can be no doubt of the constitutional propriety of Parliament intervening if we think that local authorities are going too far. There can be no doubt about the support of the Government for the principles behind the Bill.

My noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale also made it clear that the Government have reservations about some aspects of the Bill and it is my duty to comment on those. First, the Bill goes over ground that Parliament has recently traversed. The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 made significant changes in the law relating to sex education in schools. It transferred responsibility for decisions on sex education to the new governing bodies to be set up for every maintained school. It required those concerned to ensure that any teaching on sex is set within a clear moral context and is supportive of family life. There are those who feel that it is premature to enact further measures until we see how the 1986 Act works. On the other hand, the supporters of the Bill have argued forcefully that there is sufficient scope within the Act for the continuance of measures of which we and they disapprove.

Secondly, the Local Government Act 1986 made provision for a code of recommended practice for local authorities when making decisions on publicity. Again, it can be argued that time should be given for this code to be produced, approved by Parliament, and take effect. My noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale told the other place that we intended to include a provision in the code that local authority publicity should not offend against generally

[Dr. Rhodes Boyson]

accepted moral standards. I can confirm that today we are issuing that code of practice for formal consultation with the local authority associations, as required by the Act.

Finally, it can be argued — people have done that through the ages in the House—that it is premature and that we ought to deal with all the areas in which discretionary activity by local authorities is causing concern. That, of course, is what F. M. Cornford in his classic work "Microcosmographia Academica" identified as the principle of the wedge. I have a copy of that book with me, not by accident. As hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber will know,

"The Principle of the Wedge is that you should not act justly now for fear of raising expectations that you may act still more justly in the future—expectations which you are afraid that you may not have the courage to satisfy".

The House will have to decide for itself whether or not this approach is correct. I conclude by saying once more that the Government have great sympathy for the aims of those who have promoted this Bill. In fairness to the House, we have identified and I have brought to its attention some aspects which may be shortcomings. It is for the House to decide whether those shortcomings are so great that the clause should not stand part of the Bill. It is a private Member's Bill and the House must make up its mind.

However, the Government do not take the view that those shortcomings are sufficient to deny the Bill a passage. As those who have read my writings will expect, for my part I think that the clause should stand part of the Bill, and I support it.

Mr. Dubs: I am a little taken aback by the way in which the House has, with a measure that is bound to attract a lot of publicity, bypassed some of the normal procedures. I am not clear what happened on a particular Friday afternoon, but it seems that we gave the Bill a Second Reading on the nod—I assume that is what happened—and then we bypassed the normal Committee stage upstairs and we are dealing with the Committee stage on the Floor of the House.

Dr. Boyson: I believe that the Bill was moved to a Committee of the whole House. I just say that in fairness.

Mr. Dubs: I am aware of that. However, we have avoided the normal process of discussion in Committee upstairs and taken it on the Floor of the House. It is my experience that when the House does not give a measure proper scrutiny, it is likely that bad legislation will be the outcome. That has been my experience whenever the House has tried to do things on the nod.

Dame Jill Knight: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the measure was fully discussed in another place. That is not unusual in itself. There was a wide-ranging debate, including a Committee stage and Report stage, and a small amendment was moved. There has been nothing untoward in the way in which the Bill has been produced or put to the House. Every rule of the House has been adhered to.

Mr. Dubs: I am not suggesting that every rule has not been adhered to. I am suggesting that, if we can reach the Committee stage of a Bill without the necessary preliminary debate, discussion and scrutiny, although every rule of the House may have been adhered to technically, the real, proper process by which we subject legislation to debate and discussion is not taking place.

The fact is that most people were not aware that the measure was coming up for debate. If they had known, not withstanding the local elections yesterday, the House would not have been so empty. It was assumed that we would spend more time on the previous Bill and that we would not reach this point. The House and the country are effectively being taken unawares by the way in which this measure is being dealt with.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I have to object to the hon. Gentleman's line of argument. The Bill was on the Order Paper last Friday for all hon. Members, the Gallery and everybody else to see. I moved that it should have a Second Reading at a time when there were other hon. Members in the House. They could have objected had they chosen, under the long-standing procedures of the House. But not one Member chose to object, with the result that the Bill obtained a Second Reading, as the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said, on the nod.

I did not propose that it should be committed to a Committee of the whole House, but with a one-clause Bill is it not really rather fatuous to insist that it has to be sent to a Committee upstairs, which would be appropriate for a longer and more detailed measure? I think that the whole Bill occupies less than about 40 lines. Surely, on a matter of broad general interest, hon. Members might well be glad to have the opportunity to intervene in the Committee stage which is offered when the Bill is taken on the Floor of the House but which is restricted when the Bill is committed to a group of 16 or 20 Members.

Every Member of the House could have been present here today to intervene on the Bill if he had so chosen, but I think the vast majority of Members support the Bill and those who have reservations about it are wise enough to keep them to themselves.

Mr. Dubs: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's line of argument. We all know what happens on Friday afternoons. This measure has been slipped though and I am sure that most Members do not realise that we are in the middle of the Committee stage of a Bill that we did not expect to reach today.

Dame Jill Knight: It was on the Order Paper.

Mr. Dubs: It is no use the hon. Lady saying that it was on the Order Paper. The fact remains that most hon. Members were not aware of it. There are masses of measures on the Order Paper every Friday. There are more than 20 on today's Order Paper. If the first 10 had been withdrawn and we had started making progress on the 11th everyone would have been astonished, as the hon. Lady well knows.

I do not suggest that any Member has not behaved absolutely properly. I am protesting that we are the victims of a procedure which is undemocratic in practice and denies Members the chance to debate a very important matter. I am perfectly aware that there is concern in our constituencies about this issue. Some of us would have liked to consult further on it, had that been possible. It was not possible because of the way in which we have arrived at debating this measure. I believe that the situation is wrong and undemocratic.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) said that the Bill had been subjected to scrutiny in another place, but that is no substitute for a proper debate in this House. Most of our constituents do not

follow what goes on in the other House and have no access to Members of that House, so most of our constituents are prevented from making their views known if the only debate is in the other place. If ever there was an argument for abolishing the other House, it is the argument that because a matter has been discussed there we need not bother about it. That is an appallingly undemocratic attitude and I resent the argument by an elected Member of this House that Members of the other House, who are unelected and accountable to no one, have discussed the matter so we need not bother. We are caught in a situation in which we cannot give the measure proper scrutiny.

The Minister has said that the Government have three reservations about the Bill but that if the House wills it the measure will go through. That is not right either. We are dealing with an extremely important matter which goes to the heart of moral issues in this country and the way in which our children are educated. Whatever one's view—the hon. Member for Edgbaston surely believes in proper debate and discussion—it is wrong that we should be bulldozed on such a sensitive and difficult issue on the basis that it has been slipped through the House of Commons when only half a dozen Members were present, so it can just go through.

I resent that approach. It is wrong in principle, even if an election is called on Monday, to bulldoze a measure through in this way. It is possible that a majority might have supported it, but there is no way of putting the matter to the test. It has been an abuse of the procedures of the House to bypass normal democratic debate and discussion and I bitterly resent the fact that the House has been put in this position. There is no opportunity for a proper debate because the Benches are empty.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: The hon. Gentleman is continuing to advance an argument which is really contrary to the whole tradition and procedures of the House. The fact that the Committee stage of the Bill was on the Order Paper for today was printed and was known to any hon. Member who chose to take an interest. Any hon. Member who wishes to take part in this Committee stage is able to do so now. I have noticed that there are not many hon. Members who wish to intervene in support of what the hon. Gentleman is saying. That is perhaps something that the hon. Gentleman should also take into account. If he feels that there are large numbers of hon. Members who would oppose the Bill had they appreciated that it was going to have its Committee stage today, would he be so kind as to enlighten us by giving us their names?

1 pm

Mr. Dubs: This is preposterous. The hon. Gentleman understands what I am saying. I have said that there should be proper debate. I have not ventured a single comment on the merits or demerits of the Bill. I have said that it is wrong in principle that we should not have the opportunity for a proper debate. We are being denied that opportunity. The Government have said that they wash their hands of the Bill and that someone else should decide. They think that there is no need for the Bill, but they are not prepared to do anything about it. That is quite wrong.

Dr. Boyson: I want to explain one point for the record. I did not say that I did not think that there was no need for the Bill. I said that, as the Bill stood, the Government may have certain reservations about certain points. However, we support the Bill and I certainly support it as an individual. We did not say that we did not think that there was no need for the Bill. There is a need for a measure to control homosexual and lesbian propaganda in schools. I will not be misinterpreted on that point.

Mr. Dubs: Fine. I hear what the Minister has said. Nevertheless, I listened very carefully to the Minister's comments. He went through the Bill and then said that he had to express three reservations on behalf of the Government. I accept fully his own personal position. However, he went through the reservations, which suggested to me that the Bill at this point was unnecessary because two other Bills will come pretty close to meeting the same aims. Therefore, it was not necessarily right in principle to have a third piece of legislation until we have had a chance to assess the effects of the other two. That is a pretty fair rendering of what the Minister said. Normally when we are bulldozed in this way, the Government would say that the Bill should make no further progress and we should consider the impact of the other two pieces of legislation first and then decide. That is the proper way in which a responsible House of Commons would legislate, not in the way that we are seeking to legislate today.

Dame Jill Knight: I remind the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) that earlier today he appeared to suggest to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) the reverse to that procedure. He said that he would be perfectly happy to skip the other Bills to reach the Bill that he is promoting or one of his hon. Friend's Bills. The hon. Member for Battersea must be consistent. There are rules to which we must all adhere. The hon. Member must not go in one direction in response to one Bill and another direction on a point of procedure.

Mr. Dubs: I have been perfectly consistent. Let me explain to the hon. Lady why I am being consistent. When I argued that there was a Bill standing in my name further down the list on the Order Paper, it must be understood that I was seeking a Second Reading debate for that Bill so that the House would be able to debate the basic principle of my Bill—

Dame Jill Knight: That is exactly the same.

Mr. Dubs: —after which the Bill would have gone to a Standing Committee for further discussion and scrutiny, as is proper.

Dame Jill Knight: Within the rules of the House, the hon. Member for Battersea is perfectly free to ask that his Bill be taken on the Floor of the House. Every hon. Member must consider the position and the date. Bearing in mind that full debates may have taken place in another place, every hon. Member is perfectly free to decide to have a debate on the Floor of the House, and the hon. Member for Battersea would have been free to make such a decision.

Mr. Dubs: I am not disputing the right of any hon. Member to make that decision, nor am I disputing the right of any hon. Member to use the small print of our Standing Orders to expedite business that they wish to further. Nevertheless, I also have the right to say on behalf of many other hon. Members that we resent the fact that we are being bulldozed in this way without an opportunity for debate.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: Who are those hon. Members?

Mr. Dubs: It is no good the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) asking from a sedentary position who they are. It is disgraceful that an important Bill that affects the way in which our children are to be educated is to be debated without more than a handful of hon. Members present. Even the hon. Member for Edgbaston would surely not wish her Bill to progress without proper debate or discussion.

I resent one more thing. We have not had a chance to go to our constituencies and discuss some of the details with constituents who have raised those matters with us so that we can refer to them in the House. I did not know that the Bill would come up in this form; otherwise I should not be making these points. I am not alone in that. Had I known that, I should have been able to come to the debate with more examples, possibly even in support of what the hon. Member for Edgbaston said, or in contradiction of what she said. But, above all, I would have had the chance to speak to teachers and education authorities.

Technically, the Bill is about local government. The Minister had long experience in education before he came to the House, but there is no representative of the Department of Education and Science on the Government Front Bench. Instead, we have a Minister from the Department of the Environment. I understand why—it is a local government Bill—but the Bill is in fact about education. We are not approaching it as if it were about education, but we should. Then there would be Ministers from the Department of Education and Science and colleagues of mine on the Opposition Front Bench who speak on education, who could address properly and sensibly how best to deal with those difficult and sensitive areas in our schools. I am angry that we cannot do that.

There is not even the chance for a pause so that the House can reflect on those matters. We have to go rushing through with the measure. That is wrong in principle. I should like to ask you, Sir Paul, whether there is any way in which we can be protected from that procedure, which, although technically correct, in practice represents an abuse of hon. Members' rights.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Let me try to help the hon. Gentleman and respond to his question. The proceedings are entirely in order, so I am afraid that there is nothing that I can do to assist him.

Mr. Dubs: I feared as much. I remember when a Bill was being rushed through at an earlier stage in the proceedings than the stage that we have now reached, and Mr. Deputy Speaker said from the Chair that Mr. Speaker did not like Bills being rushed through without an opportunity for proper debate. Although the example is not parallel, that is still the position.

Having made my protest—I feel strongly about that—I should like to refer to the debates in the other place. More than one hon. Member has said, "Well, the other place has debated it. That is all right. It was a full debate." However much publicity and attention were given to the Bill and its passage in the other place, there was not nearly as much as there would be if we were to debate it properly in the House of Commons. We all know that. Feelings run high on the issue, or the hon. Member for Edgbaston would not have called forth the examples that she gave in her speech. I am sure that some people would oppose the Bill and others would like to understand its details better and the implications.

Because feelings run high on the issue, it would have been right for public opinion to be made aware that we were debating the Bill today. Whatever excuses we have or do not have for looking at the small print or at the Order Paper for what might come up for debate today, the fact is that the public were not aware of that. I defy any hon. Member to say that a large number of his constituents realised that we would discuss the issue today and that he had letters urging him to take a particular view on the Bill in the debate this Friday. I am certain that not one hon. Member had such a letter or any representations from a constituent.

Therefore, we are proceeding without regard to our constituents and without the normal processes that allow us, in discussion and by listening to our constituents, which is a key part of our job, to come here with better knowledge and better information.

I should have liked more detailed discussion with education authorities. The Minister read something from the Inner London education authority. The hon. Member for Edgbaston read something from an education authority and the hon. Member for Kensington also read something that referred to one or two education authorities. However, we have not had a chance to listen to what the education authorities have to say.

If the education authorities had been aware that this Bill was to come before us, it is absolutely certain that they would have written to us to give us their views for and against the Bill. They would also have given us details and examples and we should have had a better informed debate then we are having at the moment. That has been denied to us and it is why I am resentful about the way in which we have approached this matter.

In her speech introducing the clause, which, after all, is virtually the totality of the Bill, the hon. Member for Edgbaston said a great deal about AIDS about which I must take issue with her. I concede that I am certainly not an expert on the subject, but I have listened to and read a certain amount about it, as we all have. I resent the hon. Lady's suggestion that there is such a clear link between AIDS and homosexuality and that heterosexuality hardly comes into the issue. It would have been helpful if a Minister from the Department of Health and Social Security had been here to clarify the matter.

I have not come equipped with all the evidence, documents or research that I have received. Quite frankly, I am not sure that the hon. Lady's comments were accurate. She suggested that we must not in any way—I am not sure whether she used the word "promote" but for the sake of example I shall quote from her Bill—"promote homosexuality" in schools, because of the likelihood that that would increase the chance of people getting AIDS. Is that a fair version of what the hon. Lady said?

Dame Jill Knight: Not really. I mentioned the various diseases which, sadly, are linked with homosexuality. I said that any venereologist would agree with that. I gave a long list of those diseases. I did not intend to speak about AIDS at length. It was the hon. Gentleman's intervention that led me to say a little more about that than I had intended. Our disagreement about this would clearly be settled if the hon. Gentleman would ask doctors about it.

Serious diseases are linked with homosexuality but that was only one of a number of reasons why children should be protected from being taught that homosexuality is a way of life.

Mr. Dubs: The hon. lady is linking two rather different things. It is one thing to say that homosexuality is a way of life from which children should be protected—I shall come to that a little later—but it is another thing to assert, as I think she did, that somehow homosexuality means AIDS and that AIDS means homosexuality.

Dame Jill Knight *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Lady is nodding, so that is what she is saying. However, I must say to her that, having seen her own Secretary of State for Social Services on television and having watched some of the educational and publicity programmes about AIDS, I am by no means convinced that the hon. Lady understands these matters as well as she claims.

Dame Jill Knight: Go and ask a doctor.

Mr. Dubs: It is no good the hon. Lady saying, "Go and ask a doctor," because doctors appeared on the television programmes. Some time ago the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health and Social Security spoke in one of the Committee rooms at a meeting in this Palace of Westminster to answer hon. Member's questions about AIDS. I have listened to doctors. I am not quite as ignorant as the hon. Lady suggests. She made the dangerous suggestion that AIDS affects only homosexuals and that heterosexuals are all right.

Dame Jill Knight: I did not say that.

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Lady came very close to saying that. I gave her three opportunities to put the record straight, but all that she has done is repeat her suggestion. I am happy to give the hon. Lady another chance. To put the matter in perspective, the hon. Lady came armed with information to pilot the Bill through the House and claimed that I was ignorant while she was knowledgeable. If she has all this knowledge, perhaps she would at least explain the matter. I believe that it is both wrong and dangerous to suggest that heterosexuals are not enormously at risk from AIDS.

1.15 pm

The publicity, information and statements from the Secretary of State and Ministers at the Department are based on the suggestion that there is an increasing risk of AIDS spreading through the heterosexual population. Not one hon. Member can deny that. We must be aware of that risk, as well as the risk to other groups, such as homosexuals and addicts who use infected needles. Those are the three main groups. One of the great dangers which prompted the Government to spend £20 million on publicity was the enormous risk of AIDS spreading through the heterosexual population. There is evidence from almost every country to that effect, so I do not see why the hon. Lady seeks to deny it.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is the hon. Gentleman disputing the figures released by the DHSS, which show that so far well over 90 per cent. of deaths from AIDS have been among the homosexual community?

Mr. Dubs: I am not disputing the DHSS figures. I am not sure whether the figure is 90 per cent., but I take the hon. Gentleman's word for it. My point is that the risk to the heterosexual population of AIDS spreading is great. The hon. Lady suggested otherwise, and I was objecting to that.

This is not just a debating point on a Friday afternoon to be forgotten. The matter is serious because it affects our ability to educate all people about the risks, so that they know what the dangers are and can take appropriate action to minimise, reduce or prevent their catching AIDS. The Government have paid great attention to that, Ministers have appeared on television and the DHSS has produced many documents. There has been an enormous effort to educate the whole population about it and it is wrong to give a misleading impression, as the hon. Lady did.

I do not oppose the Bill, but I wish to express the anxieties which many people share. The hon. Lady spoke about promoting homosexuality. I am particularly anxious that we provide proper education about the danger of AIDS and I agree with the Government's efforts to publicise it. We may need more of them, and perhaps the Government started too slowly, but at least they are doing something. We must consider how we shall continue the education campaign against this dreadful disease and we must be careful that we do not inadvertently pass legislation which makes educating our children and young people more difficult. No hon. Member would dispute that. Indeed, in Committee on the Obscence Publications Bill, we were anxious that nothing in the Bill should prevent proper education about the risks that AIDS presents to all sectors of the population.

The hon. Lady also spoke about syphilis and one or two other diseases. Again, she suggested that they had close links with homosexual people. Unless I misheard, she did not add that syphilis can also affect heterosexual people. Indeed, I thought that the risks were about equal to both groups. She sought to confine her remarks about the risks of syphilis spreading to the homosexual population only.

That is misleading and wrong. After all, we are talking about legislation that has to do with how we educate our children. It has to do with education in our schools and about how health risks can properly be put to schoolchildren so that the risks and dangers to them can be minimised. The hon. Lady did not seem to pay much attention to that. Clause 1 states:

> "A local authority shall not—
>
> *(a)* promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality;".

I should like to ask a question about that. If I had had the opportunity, I would have put down amendments designed to probe more deeply into this matter. Are we quite certain that the phrase "promotion of homosexuality" will not prevent publicity about the risk of the spread of AIDS from homosexual behaviour? That is important in terms of educating our children.

Whether the hon. Lady likes it or not, it is not in dispute that about 10 per cent. of the male population are homosexual. I do not know how accurate that figure is, but it is one that is generally quoted. If that is the case, it is likely that in any class of schoolboys 10 per cent. of them will become homosexuals whether they want to or not. That is the way in which physically and biologically they are developing. I am not aware of any medical opinion which disputes the basis of that.

The Minister spent a good part of his life teaching. I wonder whether we should not pay attention to the fact

[Mr. Dubs]

that in a class of boys about 10 per cent. are likely to develop as homosexuals. Is it not important that schools should publicise the risk of AIDS to those boys? If they are not taught about that, I do not see how we are doing right by the boys in our schools. I should like to see this issue properly debated. Some people may say that the promotion of homosexuality does not mean that, and that one can describe the risk of getting AIDS through homosexual behaviour while not promoting homosexuality. I do not know the answer to that question. If I had the answer and could be assured that that was not a problem, I could move on. However, while I have my doubts, I have to draw the attention of the House to that.

I am persuaded by medical opinion and by what the Government have said that in the AIDS epidemic we face one of the greatest health crises that has affected us, and indeed the world, for centuries. We must do nothing that minimises our ability to prevent this dreadful disease from spreading. Is this Bill likely to have that effect, or is it likely to hamper the right of teachers to give sex education that will explain these matters, consistent with the 1986 Act about which the Minister spoke? Perhaps he will explain that in a little more detail. That is one of my worries about the Bill.

My other worry about the Bill relates to what the Minister said about the sort of educational material that can be made available to schools and the rights of parents, governing bodies and teachers to decide together how these matters can be put over in schools. I should like to have a little more information about that. I appreciate that the Minister cannot speak on behalf of the Department of Education and Science, but I am quite sure that he is equipped to throw a little more light on the subject. My two main worries are, first, whether we are preventing the teaching of all students in schools about the dangers of AIDS and, secondly, about the general approach to sex education and how it will be affected by the Bill.

We cannot deny that homosexuality exists and that there must be some reference to it; otherwise we will send our young people out into the world not very knowledgeable. I repeat that, in the context of advertising and publicising the dangers of AIDS, we have gone some way towards doing that. I should like to believe that the Bill does not stop us going further in that direction.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 20, Noes Nil.

Division No. 188] **[1.24 pm**

AYES

Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Buck, Sir Antony
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dykes, Hugh
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Brandon Rhys Williams
and Mr. Roger Sims.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alf Dubs.

Question accordingly agreed to.

It appearing on the report of the Division that fewer than forty Members had taken part in the Division, THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *declared that the Question was not decided, and left the Chair.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker *declared that the business under consideration stood over until the next Sitting of the House.*

Tobacco Smoking (Public Places) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.35 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

As hon. Members will see, this Bill has all-party support. That support includes the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) who unfortunately cannot be with us today, as he has not been well recently. The House will know that the hon. Gentleman is not standing in the next general election. He has been a formidable proponent on the health front, particularly over smoking and tobacco products. The House will miss his contributions in the future, and I am sorry that he cannot support me in today's debate, as I know that he would if he were present.

The Bill has, as it were, two prongs. Its aim—I quote from the long title—is

"To limit smoking in public places; to make provision with regard to smoking and employment".

I have sometimes been described as a vehement anti-smoker. Perhaps I should explain that I am not a great fanatic or zealot on the issue. Nor am I a converted smoker; I have never smoked, although I claim no great credit for that. I well understand the pleasure that other people obtain from smoking. I can even say that some of my best friends are smokers. Indeed, I must confess that my wife enjoys the occasional cigarette, and that my loyal and very hard-working secretary valiantly types out letters about my Bill encompassed by wreaths of smoke. I should add that, as she is fortunate enough to have a room to herself, she would not be affected by its provisions.

I can also understand people who find that they are, as the saying goes, "dying for a fag". There are times when I feel that I could just do with a tot of whisky. I can also understand those who find themselves addicted to tobacco products. I confess that I, too, have an addiction—to a certain well-known brand of glacier mints. If I were told by the medical authorities that glacier mints were harmful to me, I dare not contemplate what might be the withdrawal effect on me of ceasing to be able to have them. I am therefore not without sympathy for the smoker.

However, the medical evidence on the harm done by cigarette products is overwhelming. Smoking is the largest avoidable cause of disease in the United Kingdom. The medical authorities estimate that 100,000 people a year die prematurely from smoking. That means that about 10 people die every hour, simply because they smoke. They do not have to die.

Prohibition is not practicable, and I do not suggest that it is, but it is the duty of Parliament and the Government to persuade smokers to reduce their smoking, or to stop smoking, and to dissuade young people from starting to smoke. To this end, a number of steps have been initiated.

Some of us were disappointed that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not increase the price of tobacco products in his last Budget. Advertisements and cigarette packets carry health warnings, and the larger the warnings and the stronger the language the more effective they will be. Some believe that there is a strong argument not simply for restricting the advertising of tobacco products but for banning it altogether.

As for the promotion of tobacco products, all sorts of stories are put across by the tobacco companies about what they are trying to do. I am a marketing man and I know the value of promotion in trying to sell a product to new markets. Means are used to attract public attention to tobacco products, such as the sponsoring of concerts and sports events. I am strongly of the opinion that it is wrong that sports events should be sponsored by the tobacco companies, because of the implied connection between sport and health. That is clearly inappropriate. It is particularly sad that from time to time the BBC and the independent television companies have televised events that are sponsored by tobacco companies. I welcome the modification of the extent to which that happens, as evidenced by the recent televising of the snooker championship. There are more subtle and insidious ways in which cigarette companies use their names by promoting concerts and holiday agencies, and they should be the subject of further action. My Bill would be another way to reduce the incidence of smoking.

I have referred to the proven harm of smoking, but there is increasing evidence that harm is done to the non-smoker by so-called passive smoking. The House will be familiar with the recent report of the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health that refers to the increase in the risk of lung cancer from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. It suggests that the risk of lung cancer for people who are living with smokers, is increased to the extent of 30 per cent.

Apart from the medical arguments, one has to have regard to the social arguments. Smoking creates a very unpleasant atmosphere and a smell that clings to other people's clothes. If I were to go into the Members' Tea Room, or into the waiting room of a railway station, or into an office or work place and produced an aerosol that let out a foul smelling odour, I should be considered, at the least, to be anti-social, if not offensive, yet it is considered to perfectly normal in those settings for somebody to light up a cigarette or, even worse, a cigar and to puff smoke all over those in the immediate vicinity. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) is looking uncomfortable—as well he may the next time he sits beside me in the Tea Room. It can be argued that one does not have to be there and that one can leave, but I do not see why one should have to leave because of the circumstances I have described. It is far more difficult for those in a work place. They cannot leave.

Let me make it perfectly clear that the purpose of my Bill is not to restrict the liberty of smokers but to safeguard the rights of non-smokers who are, after all, in the majority; it is estimated that nowadays probably no more than a third of adults smoke. The idea of setting aside separate places in which people can smoke is not a new one. We are familiar with smoke rooms in pubs, for example. For many years, there have been railway carriages marked with "No smoking" signs, and to the credit of those who run public places, such as restaurants, some now have areas marked "non-smoking". But that implies that there is something slightly eccentric about being a non-smoker—that one is the odd one out, and that special provision has to be made. I should like to change that attitude so that it is accepted that non-smoking is the norm and areas have to be designated for smokers.

My Bill is drawn in general terms, and I intend that the detailed provisions should be set out in regulations that the Secretary of State is empowered to make. I envisage that, for example, in very small places, or in places to which the

[Mr. Roger Sims]

public resort for relatively short periods, no smoking would be allowed. That would include lifts, escalators, taxis, shops, public toilets, and so on. Similarly, it would include business and Government offices to which the public had access and, I think, theatres, cinemas, classrooms, lecture halls, hospitals and clinics. It would seem reasonable that in restaurants at least one third of the total area should be designated for non-smokers. In view of the proportion of non-smokers to smokers, which I mentioned, I should have thought that it would be generous to allow two thirds of the space for smokers—unless, of course, a room was particularly small, in which case it would be designated a non-smoking area.

In places of employment, areas such as the cafeteria should have at least a third of the space designated as non-smoking areas. It must be assumed that shared work areas are non-smoking areas unless they have been otherwise designated with the agreement of all those who work in them.

People will ask whether a Bill such as this will be acceptable, whether it will work and whether there is a demand for it. I think that it is certainly acceptable—that is evidenced by the way in which the complete non-smoking policy of London Underground has been accepted. We know, too, that a number of restaurants and cinemas now have non-smoking areas and that in most theatres no smoking is allowed.

On the question whether the Bill will work, similar legislation is working in the United States, where 40 states have a complete ban on smoking in public places and 11 others have legislation restricting smoking in work places. The Americans have had few problems of enforcement, and it is not uncommon to find that the cost of signs and posters stating whether an area is a no-smoking area is often offset by the cleaning costs. I am afraid that smoking is a filthy and dirty habit. I remember talking to a British Rail employee who had to deal with complaints about labels being scratched off the windows of non-smoking carriages. He said, "You can always tell which are the non-smoking carriages. Just look at the colour of the ceilings." That is perfectly true.

Is there a demand for this legislation? I can only say that, since my Bill was published, I have received letters from people all over the country supporting it warmly. I shall not take up too much time of the House, but should like to quote from a couple of those letters. A couple wrote:

"There is nothing more objectionable when going for a meal, to arrive, start ones meal only to find the people on the table adjacent just finishing theirs and lighting cigarettes all round!"

Another gentleman wrote:

"I am a sound engineer for the BBC and have to sit alongside smokers for hours at a time. The BBC management gives no support for an all-out smoking ban in studios areas. Legislation is the only real answer. If our ventilation plants leaked smelly dirty smoke into work areas, no one would work there, but smokers see nothing wrong in polluting the air around them."

Another lady explained how smoke seriously affects her throat and chest, so she must be extremely careful whenever she goes to a public place to ascertain whether people are smoking. I received some interesting correspondence from a public transport operator who is faced with determining the extent to which he can introduce and enforce non-smoking in a competitive environment. He commented:

"This is a matter which should be dealt with by legislation."

There is pressure for legislation. I am conscious of the fact that I shall be opposed from at least two directions. One is the so-called libertarian lobby—those who feel that people should be free to do as they like. We all know that life is not like that. To live in a reasonable civilised environment we all have to consider each other and adjust our behaviour accordingly. As I have implied, I believe that my Bill strikes a reasonable balance between the liberty of the smoker to smoke and the liberty of the non-smoker to breathe smoke-free air.

The other opposition will come from the tobacco producers—the industry which sees itself, even today, having to become smaller because of the reduction in smoking, and it is very anxious about that. I hope that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) does not mind my pinching one of his best lines, which is that the industry kills off 100,000 people a year, so that it has to find more customers to keep up consumption.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I shall seek royalties from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Sims: Of course there are more subtle ways in which the industry will use its influence, especially by advertising in the press. A few months ago, an article in the *Daily Telegraph* was critical of those trying to restrict sports sponsorship by tobacco companies. The article was a fair comment on a matter of some controversy and I wrote a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* responding to it and putting counter-arguments. I thought that, perhaps, as a Member of Parliament, and in particular as the chairman of the all-party parliamentary Action on Smoking and Health group, my views might merit publication. Not only was my letter not published but not a single letter responding to that article was published, despite the fact that I know that several doctors wrote in similar terms. I subsequently wrote to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* a letter that was not even acknowledged. Despite the fact that I wrote it to him privately inviting him to comment on the fact that there had been no printed response to the original article, I heard nothing further.

I do not like to feel that the independence of the press is influenced by commercial considerations, but I simply invite the House to note the volume of advertising by tobacco companies in *The Telegraph Sunday Magazine* and the one-sided presentation of the argument which I have described.

I accept that there will be objections to my Bill, but I hope that I have persuaded the House about its desirability. In particular, I hope that I have persuaded my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—who has so effectively promoted the need and the means for healthy living and that she will consider my Bill sympathetically.

1.55 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on introducing the Bill and on the way in which he presented it. He has made a very good case for it. As a libertarian, I agree principally with the Bill. We should always encourage people to have freedom and to enjoy

themselves, provided that they do not impinge upon the freedom and enjoyment of other people. What has influenced me considerably has been the effect of the no smoking ban on the Underground. The effect has been remarkable, not only because the atmosphere is so much better but because there is less litter, dirt, cigarette ends and packets, and bits of silver paper laying around in the tube and on the trains. That has made a remarkable difference to the Underground and has done a great deal to influence public opinion that smoking is all right, but only in the right places.

I have some reservations about parts of the Bill, such as the places where the public would have access, which could be places such as solicitors' offices or business premises. That will have to be gone into thoroughly and clarified in Committee.

I am glad that there is provision in the Bill for full consultation with employees so that management and employees can agree on places where smoking should be permitted and where it should be banned.

I imagine that the Bill will not apply in the Palace of Westminster. However, I would hope that it will have a spin-off effect because, while we have an admirable Smoking Room, as a reformed smoker—somebody who used to smoke large quantities of cigarettes but who went through the painful process of giving it up, for which I feel much better — I have no objection to other people smoking. However, I find smoke a difficulty in some of our Committee rooms, which are rooms where the public has access on occasions. Hon. Members could learn quite a bit about how to improve our own air and environment by introducing the concept that it is not welcome for hon. Members to smoke, particularly in some of the smaller Committee rooms and in other parts of the Palace of Westminster.

I believe that there will be difficulties in implementing the legislation, if it goes through, in restaurants. I can well sympathise with people who want to sit in a part of a restaurant where smoking will be disallowed. But it is extremely difficult for restaurateurs, particularly in some of the smaller restaurants, to earmark those spaces. It depends so much on their custom and on what sort of bookings they get whether they can place people in those areas.

It would be preferable to work towards a voluntary code of practice. That is something that could emanate from the debate. Many restaurateurs already say to people, "Would you like to be in a non-smoking area?". If possible, I always go for the non-smoking area. It is not essential that we have legislation to do so much of what is in the Bill. I hope that today's debate will lead to a greater awareness — I believe it will — of the desire of many people to see smoking banned from some areas and concentrated in other areas.

I suspect that the Bill will not make progress. If a general election intervenes and prevents its progress, I hope that we can return to the subject in the next Parliament.

1.59 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I do not want to detain the House for very long, but I should declare an interest, as indeed should every hon. Member, as I am presently standing, and a few Members are sitting, in a public place where smoking has been banned for nearly 300 years. The Standing Orders have provided since 1665,

"That no Member do presume to take tobacco in the gallery of the House or at a committee table,"

on the assumption that nobody would be so offensive and inconsiderate as to smoke in the Chamber. That was not decided in an attempt to get hon. Members to look after their health but because people found the fumes, smell and smoke from other people's pipes — that is presumably what they were smoking at that time — too noxious to be acceptable in civilised company — if the House of Commons could ever be described as "civilised company".

I have another interest to declare. As chairman of the London group of Labour Members I was a party to the decision-making process within the Labour party in London which led to the prohibition of smoking on London Transport. I recall that we had a few discussions about whether that was likely to prove unpopular and whether it could properly be portrayed as a gross invasion of people's liberty and so on. We concluded that some people might portray it as an invasion of other people's liberty but that, generally speaking, it would work, be successful and that not many people would take offence. I am glad to say that that is how it turned out because no one in politics likes to be unpopular. I am convinced that the ban on smoking on London Transport, both at the stations and on the Underground trains, has proved to be popular.

One of the things we need to remember is that that ban has proved popular with the large proportion of smokers. All the surveys show that a large proportion of smokers would like to give up and welcome any outside deterrent because it brings them nearer to giving up.

All that was done—the House banning smoking and the prohibition of smoking on the Underground — before there was really any substantial evidence to show the adverse effects of somebody smoking close to another individual. That has now been described as secondary smoking, which seems more popular on the Conservative Benches than secondary picketing. However, there is little doubt about the effect now and there are very few people of any scientific merit, except for a few wholly financed by the tobacco industry, who would dispute the claim that the inhalation of other people's smoke is damaging in the long-term. It is not as damaging as smoking but it does make a considerable contribution to lung and heart disease as well as being a general irritant causing people to cough and so on.

I am not entirely sure whether the Bill of the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims)—he has the support of a number of my hon. Friends — will do the trick. However, we need legislation to help the extension of non-smoking in public places. If it is left purely to a voluntary effort we shall not see the progress that we expect, largely because people such as restaurateurs will be as dubious about the effects on their popularity as we in the London Labour party were about the effects on our popularity of banning smoking on the Underground. As their immediate livelihoods would be at stake they might not be willing to take too many risks in that respect. However, we need some legislative back-up for the developments that are taking place.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is now part of the Labour party's

[Mr. Jerry Wiggin]

official policy that, if by some mischance it was to become the Government, it would legislate to prohibit smoking in some public places?

Mr. Dobson: The logic of my argument was so obvious to the hon. Gentleman that he has moved on to my next sentence but one. I believe that we should look at the overall problems and at ill health caused by smoking and bring forward comprehensive measures to restrain it in a variety of ways. In formulating that legislation, we should have to give careful consideration to the merits of proposals to restrain smoking in public places. I am not saying that we commit ourselves to that at this moment, so it is no use the hon. Gentleman suggesting that I am. My own view is that some legislative back-up is needed, but we have not concluded that that is necessarily part of our general approach to reducing smoking.

What we have said, which I believe would have a greater impact on the reduction of smoking that almost everyone wants, is that there should be a total prohibition on the advertising and promotion of tobacco products. With 100,000 people dying of smoking-related diseases or afflictions every year, we owe it to them and to everyone else to take whatever steps are necessary to restrain smoking. That would be my first priority and it is certainly that of the Labour party. Nevertheless, we need to consider the question of smoking in public places.

One of my doubts about the measure before us, although I have considerable respect for the promoter's efforts, relates to the definition of a public place.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it is the Labour party's intention to introduce legislation to ban the sponsorship of sporting events by tobacco companies?

Mr. Dobson: We have made that perfectly clear for several years. To those who object that some people in sport would be less well paid if their pockets were not being lined by the tobacco barons, I can only say that, having met some of the Middlesex cricketers earlier this week, many sports people in this country have their incomes substantially increased beyond what they could command by getting people to pay to watch them. So far as I know, W. G. Grace did not need any sponsorship to boost his income. Amateur though he was supposed to be, he obtained a substantial income from cricket, as the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) will know.

It is totally unreasonable and irrational for any sporting activity in this country to be subsidised, and the pay of people in it substantially enhanced by the tobacco industry, when the clear purpose and objective of such sponsorship is to promote the sale of tobacco and, in particular, of a limited number of brands of cigarette. It is absurd for sporting activities, which are supposed to make people healthy in mind and body, to be used as a vehicle to persuade young people to take up smoking, as a result of which their health will almost automatically be damaged.

The Labour party has made it absolutely clear that that is our approach. We regard it as wholly unreasonable for any sporting activity to be used to promote smoking and we stick by that view. Plenty of people with much less offensive products and services are willing to sponsor sport. As the hon. Member for Lewisham, East knows, some have even come forward recently in relation to cricket sponsorship. There is nothing new in what I have just said. We have made it clear that that is our policy.

I am not sure that we accept all the various definitions of "public place", and so on, in the Bill, but I have considerable sympathy with it. As people who work in places in which we or our predecessors have had the power to ban smoking and have done so, we owe it to large numbers of employees to encourage employers, if necessary by legislative action, to provide them with workplaces that are free from other people smoking. We have devoted a lot but not enough effort to making workplaces safe, wholesome and healthy. I believe that it is absurd for an employer to take the necessary steps to make a workplace safe, wholesome and healthy and then for the employees to make things unsafe for their working colleagues.

I personally have most sympathy for the aspect of the Bill which encourages and, if necessary, would give power to employers to make workplaces free from smoke that workers did not want. That is a wholesome and reasonable proposition that we should explore. However, to return to the point that I was making before the interventions, we need a comprehensive approach to help people to stop smoking and to deter them from smoking. Similarly, we would do better to have a comprehensive approach to the consumption of booze.

Mr. Moynihan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way because I know that he wants to speak only for a short time. However, in view of the arguments that he has put forward with regard to tobacco, would he argue equally as strongly that a Labour Government would seek to place legislation on the statute book to prohibit the sponsorship of sporting events by the alcoholic drinks industry?

Mr. Dobson: No. The hon. Gentleman is clearly simply getting things written into the record. He knows full well that we distinguish between—

Mr. Wiggin: That is the purpose of this Bill. That is the purpose of the whole exercise.

Mr. Dobson: I am sorry, I cannot cope with two interventions at the same time.

Mr. Wiggin: I apologise for making a sedentary intervention. However, of course we are here to put things on the record, just as the sponsor of the Bill is absolutely certain that it will make no progress. Even if we all voted, there would not be enough support for the Bill to make progress. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) knows perfectly well that that is the purpose of the exercise.

Mr. Dobson: As long as the hon. Member for Lewisham, East does not race around to the press and say that the Labour party has suddenly enunciated a new policy on these matters, I do not mind. I have been trying to make a short speech so that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security can make her ministerial contribution. We have made it clear that we shall prohibit the promotion and advertising of tobacco products. However, we have not said that about alcohol because there is a clear distinction between the consumption of tobacco products and the consumption of alcohol. The plain fact is that virtually any smoking is harmful, whereas very few people other than those who are

dead set against drinking in any form would claim that the limited and sensible consumption of alcohol from time to time in various forms is particularly harmful. Conservative Members must have friends who are habitual drunks, and we all have friends and acquaintances who suffer from alcoholism. Indeed, I do not suppose that there is any hon. Member who does not have such an acquaintance. Therefore, as a society we must recognise that we must pay attention to the way in which we counter alcoholism. It needs a different approach from the one that I and the Labour party take towards smoking. Nevertheless, there must be a comprehensive approach which would involve changes in the licensing laws, but only as part of a comprehensive package.

I have considerable sympathy with the objectives of the Bill. However, I have considerable doubts about some of the detailed propositions and drafting aspects. The matter must be dealt with as part of a comprehensive Government-promoted approach to the reduction of smoking.

2.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on his efforts this Session with the Bill. If my postbag is anything to go by, he has a great deal of public support. I welcome the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) and I noted the words of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who has found a novel way of keeping me quiet—by talking a lot himself. Never mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst has a long record in this area, as parliamentary adviser to ASH. He has served his constituents—and indeed the nation—very well in the efforts that he has made and the way in which he has presented his case.

As my hon. Friend knows, ASH is funded partly by the Department of Health and Social Security. Last year we paid it £177,000. Its grant has gone up by about 52 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79, which shows our commitment to the work that it is trying to do. I have been associated with it. I worked with ASH for no-smoking day on 11 March and in November for the launch of the booklet "Women and Smoking. A Handbook for Action".

I agree with the suggestion about the way in which norms might be presented in future. I do not like the negative approach. I do not like to talk about no-smoking areas. I prefer to talk about smoke-free zones. Perhaps that is because I am a natural optimist, but it should be the norm that people take a close and effective interest in their health in this country, as people do in many other countries. It should be the norm that our public behaviour is pleasant and non-hazardous to others. My hon. Friend will share with me a memory of the time when, on buses or public transport, there would be a notice saying, "No spitting. Penalty £5." We do not see those notices any more because it is now not regarded as normal to indulge in such behaviour. Perhaps the time will come when certain other types of behaviour join that.

It does no harm to rehearse the dangers of smoking. Smoking causes lung cancer. There will be about 40,000 deaths from lung cancer in this country this year—about 30,000 men and about 10,000 women. In Scotland, lung cancer is now the leading killer of women prematurely and has overtaken breast cancer. Deaths from lung cancer overall have fallen by about 9 per cent. since 1979, but are up 20 per cent. among women. As the Minister responsible for women's health, I regard those figures with the greatest alarm. Among teenagers, girls now smoke more than boys. What a terrible future heritage that is.

The chances of lung cancer are 11 times greater for smokers than for non-smokers. About 1 million lung cancer cases are reported worldwide every year, and most of them are dead within two years. The survival rate of lung cancer victims five years from diagnosis is only 7 per cent., which is therefore a worse survival rate than for AIDS and many other things about which we are most concerned.

Smoking is also associated with most other common cancers, and it is a particular problem for those who enjoy drink. The death rates from cancer to the upper digestive tract for those who smoke and drink are between four and seven times as great as for those who drink but do not smoke. Therefore, I would say to people: "If you enjoy a drink, don't smoke." Smoking is strongly implicated in other respiratory diseases, especially the English disease, bronchitis, and emphysema and, most important of all, it is a factor in our biggest killer, coronary heart disease, which will kill about 150,000 people this year. There is one heart attack in this country every three and a half minutes. One third of all men under 65 will have a heart attack and half of them will die, about 40 per cent. within the first hour or so. Such a toll cannot be tolerated in this country for much longer.

Why should the Government take an interest? Surely personal freedom should matter. I say to hon. Members on both sides of the House that I am probably about as Right-wing as anybody in the House, and I am very proud of it. But there are two reasons why the overriding principle of personal freedom may sometimes be breached. The first reason is if there are substantial costs to the public purse. One of my other deeply-held Tory principles is that I would wish to see public expenditure kept under control. To the National Health Service alone, heart disease has a cost of some £400 million a year. Cancers do not cost quite so much because people tend to die fairly quickly, so they are not a burden for very long, but I would mind less what people got up to if it did not cost the Government and taxpayers an enormous amount of money. We also have to recognise the costs to industry in working days lost and in lost productivity, particularly when the people concerned are cut down in their prime.

The other main reason is that individual actions may harm others. I am an asthmatic—that is my interest. So smoking is an irritant to me and to the many thousands of asthmatics in this country.

There is now plenty of evidence that passive smoking causes illness in others. We know of the effect, in a smoker's household, of respiratory diseases in children and other family members. We know also that the contaminants in smoking can cross the placenta of a pregnant woman and damage her baby. That is even the case if she is a non-smoker, but lives with a smoking husband. We now know also that there is a chance that lung cancer can be caused in non-smokers by people who smoke.

The interim statement of the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health was published on 13 March 1987. Having considered the relevant studies, the committee concluded

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

"while none of the studies of passive smoking and lung cancer can on its own be accepted as unequivocal, the findings overall are consistent with there being a small increase in risk of lung cancer from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, possibly between 10 per cent. and 30 per cent."

That is possibly 200 or 300 extra deaths from lung cancer a year. The final report will be available later this year and the Government will then consider whether action is required, and, if so, what.

It is probably worth pointing out that that committee was set up by a Tory Government in 1973. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst knows, Tory Governments have been prepared to use legislation to take the sort of action that he seeks. The first legislation against smokers was in the 1960s. However, it was a Tory Government in 1972 who banned smoking among those handling food. It was also a Tory Government who, passed clauses in the Transport Act 1983 to provide opportunities to restrict smoking on public transport. As has been mentioned, that has been taken up by the London Underground, and by air companies such as Loganair and by Belfast Citybus Ltd. British Rail has told me that in the new timetables that are to be published next week only 25 per cent. of the places will be available to smokers. That is a spectacular improvement. Therefore, Governments have taken action on this matter.

However, even without legislation, the British are now giving up smoking faster than people in any other country. About 2·5 million smokers took part in no smoking day this year. An attitude survey that was conducted in connection with "Look After Your Heart" showed that three quarters of our people do not smoke and that three quarters of those who do wish to change. Therefore, we are making a lot of progress.

However, I must advise my hon. Friend that at this stage I do not feel that this Bill should join that collection of legislation. I do not like telling people what to do; I would much rather persuade. In principle, I would rather use almost any means but compulsion, and I especially dislike using the law. When, as a Back Bencher, I supported legislation such as that on fluoridation, the sale of scented erasers or that on seat belts, it was only because I had become convinced over a long period—in the case of fluoridation after more than 10 years' experience in the city of Birmingham — that progress on public health would be hampered by the lack of a legal framework. In those cases, I was prepared to support changes in the law. However, at this time, and in the form of this Bill, I am not yet so convinced. I do recognise, with the greatest appreciation, the motives and the evidence presented by my hon. Friend. I suspect that we agree about ends but at this time, we probably disagree about the means.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I thank the Minister for giving way, especially as I have not heard all of the debate. As someone who is passionately anti-smoking, I should like to draw her attention to the problems of the staff within her own Ministry at the DHSS who wish to be able to work in a smoke-free atmosphere. It seems that the guidance given to local offices by the DHSS head office is unclear about that. I have a case of a young woman who medically and emotionally cannot stand smoke in her environment. As a result, she is unable to work in a particular office. Can the Minister give some help to her and to other people in the same position by guaranteeing at least one smoke-free area in each DHSS local office?

Mrs. Currie: I too have had several letters similar to that. I assure the hon. Gentleman that in the DHSS we are discussing not only the question of smoking but other aspects of public health and the ways in which we might encourage our staff to take advantage of the facilities that are available, such as the screening programme. If he would like to send me the letter about which he is concerned, I shall endeavour to do what I can.

The timing of this matter is important. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst will recognise the sense of what I am saying about that. It is not just that this Session may be shorter than it might otherwise be; I am reluctant to take steps before the final report of the independent committee. I am aware that public opinion is shifting fast on this issue and that we still have too many smokers, but many people are being enabled and helped to give up, not least my husband, and I am pleased about that. Therefore, this year we may well see a sharp reduction in the number of people who may be upset, troubled or find the Bill difficult to accept.

I am also concerned that action now may be counter-productive. I do not wish to antagonise smokers or to put them on the defensive; I would much prefer to proceed on the basis of co-operation, if possible. There are plenty of examples where that is happening. ASH told me that it has had numerous requests for its document, "Smoking and Work: Ideas for Action", and that in many cases employers have reported surges in job applications from top employees of rival firms as a result of providing a smoke-free working environment. That shows that there is a great deal of movement.

I have a further fear. I am keen that business should take an interest in all aspects of health education, not just smoking, but food in the canteen, drink policies and the encouragement of a fit lifestyle. I am slightly worried that if we legislated only on smoking—I hasten to add that I have no proposals to legislate on any of the others—we may be seen to be putting the other items in the background. However, if a company, its employers and employees co-operate successfully on smoking they may wish to go further and to give attention to other practical issues, all of which will help to contribute to a healthier nation. I would be happy to see progress in all those directions.

The Bill has objectives which, from the point of public health, we support. I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise the reasons for our slight reluctance to accept it now. I congratulate him on all his efforts, which I know will continue and I wish him well with them in future.

2.26 pm

Mr. Sims: By leave of the House, I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for her remarks about me and for her comments on the Bill. In the light of what she has said and possible impending events, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion and the Bill.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Bill withdrawn.

Coal Mining Subsidence Bill

Order for Second reading read.

2.27 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It appears that I have three minutes to put my case. It is not only my constituents who are suffering from the problem of coal mining subsidence, but those of right hon. and hon. Members who have coal mining in their constituencies. British Coal has made a wicked decision on the cases of some of our constituents. The legislation makes it clear that one must claim compensation for repairs to property within six years of the cessation of coal mining beneath that property. In Nottinghamshire, for example, the National Coal Board, as it was, allowed a 12-year period, but not long ago British Coal decided to shorten it to six years. The result is that many people have been left outside that six-year period and the NCB has rejected their claims.

A few days ago the chairman of British Coal had a meeting here to talk about the future of the mining industry. At the same time I had the opportunity to question him about what he would do about the problems of people whose applications for compensation for repairs to their property damaged by coal mine workings had been rejected, but I did not receive a satisfactory reply.

The Bill has been introduced with a view to introducing some fairness in the system. The Government encourage people to be home owners and many of my constituents have bought their own homes, even from the local authority. However, when homes are damaged many claims are rejected by British Coal, which does not want to know about them. British Coal has a responsibility to meet these claims and I had hoped that perhaps we could get this Bill on to the statute book.

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 15 May.

Private Members' Bills

MATRIMONIAL INCOMES AND REMUNERATION (NOTIFICATIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Postponed to Friday 15 May, Sir.

LATE PAYMENT OF DEBTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred to Friday 3 July.

LICENSING (RETAIL SALES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Not moved.

MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

FIXED PARLIAMENTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PARENTAL LEAVE BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [27 March].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 3 July.

DRUG COMPANIES (ACCOUNTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 July.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT (PROTECTION OF BIRDS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading Read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 July.

PENSIONS TRUSTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): Postponed till Friday 3 July, Sir.

FREEHOLD ENTITLEMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: Postponed till Friday 3 July, Sir.

OPTICAL APPLIANCES (BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED PERSONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Frank Haines (Ashfield): On behalf of my right hon. Friend in charge of the Bill, Friday 15 May.

HOUSEBUYERS' PROTECTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 May.

PENSIONERS' RIGHT TO FUEL AND COMMUNICATIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 June.

INFANT LIFE (PRESERVATION) AND PATERNAL RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 15 May.

PATENTS AMENDMENT BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: With the leave of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 3 July.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [6 February].

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill committed to a Standing Committee.

INTOXICATING SUBSTANCES (SUPPLY) ACT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (QUALIFICATIONS FOR OFFICE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

National Health Service (Newham)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.34 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): An acute crisis of medical and nursing staff afflicts the National Health Service in the London borough of Newham. It is getting worse. That is why I sought this emergency debate in Parliament to lay bare the facts and to seek a response from the Government. Newham, as I have often explained to the House, has more than its share of difficulties. In health matters, the borough is caught in a pincer. As recent authoritative reports have shown, much sickness is caused by deprivation and the debilitating effects of an unhealthy environment. Good health greatly depends on adequate incomes, diets and good warm housing.

Since 1979, Government policy has doubled the number of people in Newham living in poverty on supplementary benefit, and actually trebled the number of unemployed. Cuts in housing expenditure have led to a waiting list of 12,000 people, and the worst housing in London. That damages health, especially for the most disadvantaged. Yet, when my constituents seek health care they suffer again, for they are confronted by a service in crisis, which is breaking down under the strain of trying to cope, and is under-staffed and under-resourced. A frightening burden is being placed on devoted but overworked staff, while local people endure longer waiting lists and delays in treatment. Sometimes for patients, the hours of waiting can negate the benefits of treatment and cause unnecessary pain and distress. Acute staff shortages make it difficult to maintain standards of care.

I have raised these matters before and have given Ministers the details in correspondence, but there has been no satisfactory or adequate response. It is because the situation in Newham is worsening that I deal with the matter again today.

Services for and health care of Newham patients are suffering because of shortages of staff right across the board. I spent a large part of last Tuesday discussing the matter with the Newham community health council, Lady Sherman and her colleagues at the Newham health authority, and Mr. Richard George, the manager of Newham general hospital. At present, there is a shortfall of staff of 420 in the Newham health authority. They range from medical staff locums, nursing staff, medical records staff, medical secretaries, occupational therapists, audio technicians, pharmacy staff, chiropodists, and many others. The shortfall of nurses is particularly grave. Shortages are acute among operating theatre nurses, operating department assistants, intensive therapy nurses, paediatric nurses and midwives.

The health authority is being forced to use untrained people and to have extensive recourse to agency staff, which, of course, is more expensive. But that does not help to make up the shortfall. One clear reason for the shortages is the abysmally low rates of pay in the NHS, the competition that it faces from local authorities and other employers who offer higher salaries, and also the additional London weighting that is offered by neighbouring areas. The Government recently agreed to pay this year's pay review body's recommendations on nurses' and midwives' pay. I welcome that, but the unanimous view of all those to whom I spoke was that it

was too little, too late. It still leaves salaries unacceptably low—well below those of comparable white-collar jobs—and will not solve the problem.

There was also agreement that the level of London weighting was hopelessly inadequate and in no way compensated for the high cost of housing and living in London. Contrasts were made with central banks and building societies that offered London allowances of up to £2,000 on top of already higher salaries. I was assured that, unless some flexibility and improvement is given in the face of the aggressive action of the institutions that I mentioned, the position will get worse.

Newham health authority's problems in attracting nursing staff are compounded by the inducements being offered and the vigorous recruitment drives being mounted by countries such as Australia, the United States and Saudi Arabia. Another worry is the difficulty in recruiting and retaining administrative and clerical staff, particularly for medical records departments. It is vital to have records available for all out-patient clinics and for in-patients on the wards, and it is important for patients' continuing care that their GPs are aware of what treatment is being given to them or is proposed. Yet a medical secretary on personal secretary grade gets £4,912 to £5,855. For HCO grade the salary is from £5,418 to £6,556. How many hon. Members could get a secretary for such miserly sums? When agency staff have to be employed, they are paid double. The City of London, with its big bang salaries, is only 20 minutes away on the tube, so why should secretaries work for the NHS? Yet doctors need their records.

Incidentally, I do not understand why, as Mr. Jim Franklin, a carpenter at Newham general hospital told me, fully skilled building craftsmen are being offered £29 a week less than maintenance craftsmen. Perhaps I could have an explanation.

The shortage of midwives is extremely grave. The birth rate in Newham is booming. It increased 20 per cent. last year, yet the local school of midwifery is closed because of an inability to recruit midwives. Newham is 20 per cent. short of midwives, and Newham general hospital is 15 short. That places a huge burden of stress on those who remain. It is the mothers and babies who suffer. Out of some 250,000 qualified midwives nationwide, only 30,000 are willing to practise in the NHS. This begs the question of their rewards. Even after their increase, a staff midwife receives only £7,730 per annum minimum, to £8,600 maximum. Can anyone say that that is enough?

Another acute shortage is of occupational therapists. At St. Andrew's hospital there are none at all at the moment. At Goodmayes hospital, which caters for many Newham people with mental illnesses, there is only one. She, with untrained helpers, has to provide a service for between 100 and 180 clients daily. The other vacancies have not been filled for a long time.

One of the most worrying shortages is of nurses. The monthly reports of the director of resources show a steadily worsening position, with extra costs due to the shortage of agency nurses yet still a shortage of 21 per cent. The high use of agency staff of up to 10 per cent. has serious implications for continuity of care and accountability. On Tuesday in Newham general hospital I was shocked to learn that, although there should be 10 operating theatre nurses, there are only two.

This has had a disastrous effect. The four-theatre operating suite, allowing for routine maintenance, should provide 34 sessions a week. However, this was reduced to 30 on 6 April because of nurse shortages, and on Monday of last week this had to be reduced further to only 20, a cut of 40 per cent. The surgeons cannot work for lack of nurses and the waiting list for patients grows longer. There will be 20 sessions a week for a fortnight, and no one knows what will happen after that. The hospital also has a one-third shortage of operating department assistants. There is a shortage of intensive care nurses at the hospital. These nurses give care on a one-to-one basis to patients in beds with much expensive hi-tech equipment. There are four such beds in Newham general hospital, but at least one is usually shut down.

There should be eight paediatric nurses at the hospital working with children, but there are only two. There is only a quarter of what there should be. At St. Andrew's hospital there are 90 nursing vacancies. There were once three accident and emergency departments in Newham and there is now only one, which is at Newham general. It was designed to take 32,000 to 33,000 cases per annum but it is now having to cope with 70,000. The congestion can be imagined. The waiting time for patients is usually around four hours, but is often longer. This causes great frustration and sometimes violence. The stress and strain on nurses can be imagined. Is it surprising that morale suffers? And let us recall the meagre rewards that we offer nurses. Even with the increases, a student nurse will now receive from £4,540 to £5,170. An enrolled nurse will be paid from £6,250 to £7,750. A staff nurse will receive from £7,300 to £8,600.

The service at Newham's accident and emergency department is not just on the brink of collapse; on several occasions it has collapsed and has had to be closed because of a shortage of nurses. On 5 January it closed at 5.40 pm until 10 am on 7 January. In other words, it was closed for 40 hours. On 20 March, it closed at 5 pm until 10 am on 23 March. In other words, it was closed for 65 hours. Ambulances were diverted to as far away as Romford, yet my constituents should be able to rely on the casualty service.

The position was explained in an article in the *Newham Recorder* on 15 April, which referred to hospital neglect of a dying woman. The article reads:

"Damning allegations about lack of nursing care for a dying 71-year old woman were admitted last week by Newham General Hospital. Hospital chiefs upheld her son's claim that she was left unattended for four hours after falling and badly cutting her face. The Hospital Manager . . . said: 'We apologise unreservedly. We accept that the state she was found in was unacceptable.' He said the ward she was in was understaffed, and had many nurses who were only temporary, when the incident happened over Christmas last year. 'We have been trying to improve the care on that ward ever since', he said."

The article continues:

"When her son David visited on Christmas Eve he found her slumped in a chair, unattended, with blood on her face. He stayed with her for four hours but could get no treatment for her. Mr. Cookson, who lives in America, told Newham General he was 'disgusted' with their treatment of his mother."

I can well understand that Mr. Cookson was appalled at the treatment received by his mother—so would all of us be. But Cabinet Ministers do not suffer such treatment. They do not use the service. The Prime Minister claimed that the NHS was safe in her hands, but she does not consider herself safe in its hands. When she requires treatment she goes private. We are getting double standards, a good standard for the wealthy who can buy

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

privilege and a second-class one for the rest. It is a two-tier system with profit-led care for the haves and an inferior cash-starved service for the have-nots.

The Government's encouragement of private practice is of no use to the people of Newham. My constituents see only a faltering commitment to the NHS, with a lack of resources damaging the standard and quality of health care, undermining the basic principles on which the NHS was built.

The NHS was built by a previous Labour Government on the noble socialist principle that in sickness wealth should be no advantage and poverty no disadvantage, that the best treatment should be available to all free at the point of use and paid for from general taxation. In this way the healthy support the sick. Now we have a Government who cut taxation while starving the NHS, thereby vandalising a service of which this country was once so proud.

I make no criticism of the medical staff. They are devoted to their tasks but overworked and underpaid. They are bearing the brunt, unfairly, for the under-resourcing of the NHS. The system is kept afloat only by working dedicated staff into the ground. The Government often boast about the increased throughput of more patients despite fewer beds, but higher throughput means patients are more dependent, and therefore more demanding when in hospital. But a price has to be paid, and it is being paid by the nurses. They endure stress, depression, fatigue and often poor job satisfaction through lack of time to do work properly, in deteriorating conditions. Is it surprising that morale plunges?

We must obtain practical and effective solutions to the real and pressing problems in Newham today. The Government must show that they care. I hope that I do not hear from the Minister the tired, stale old excuses or the jargon-riddled evasions that I have received in official letters before, when I have raised these matters on behalf of the people whom I represent. Action needs to be taken now, and I hope we shall see some new thinking and positive steps taken quickly to alleviate the pain and distress that exists.

First, let me deal with pay. I welcome the agreement to implement nationally the proposals of the pay review body. However, in the Newham context, we must go further. Our borough, for some inexplicable and bizarre official reason, is not considered inner London, although it is impossible to imagine a borough more "inner city" than Newham, whatever criteria one takes. Not only that, but Government statistics reveal that we are the most deprived local authority area, bar one, in the whole of England and Wales. So why this absurd and unjust discrimination? Newham should immediately be classified "inner London". That would straight away give higher salaries to many of the staff, and bring them up to those paid to our neighbours. Unless and until that is done, the attraction will always be to the adjacent boroughs, thus denuding Newham because of its low salaries—despite its high living and housing costs, the threat of crime and the other drawbacks of deprived areas.

I wrote to the Department about the matter twice last year, and received replies from the Under-Secretary on 20 May and 19 August. In his last letter, he talked of the boundaries of the London weighting. Of course a line has to be drawn somewhere, but surely it must be plain that it is ludicrously drawn at the moment, with St. Andrew's hospital on one side and Newham general on the other, and leaving the borough of Newham on the wrong side. Remedying that nonsense is something that can be beneficially done now. In addition, the Government should consider other ways of providing premium pay for areas with shortages of staff. I should have thought that that fitted in with their own ideas of "market mechanisms".

In his letter to me, the Under-Secretary said:

"In the longer term, we have identified as a top priority for the NHS Management Board, and Len Peach as Director of Personnel, achievement of an adequate supply of well-trained and motivated staff and securing action on significant shortages of manpower. Work is in hand to find ways to reflect local economic factors in pay arrangements whilst preserving the essential, national framework of the service."

So "work is in hand". That was many months ago. What has happened to that work? Why the delay? Why not get on with it? Will the Minister announce something advantageous to us today, as she has the opportunity?

Then we must look at housing. Why should staff journey to work in Newham from other, possibly leafier, suburbs? It is impossible, with prices soaring far out of their reach, for staff to buy houses in the borough. On the contrary, many nurses have been driven out, and are leaving for other parts of the country with cheaper houses and lower living costs. We shall never solve our staff shortages until we tackle the accommodation problem.

What do the Government propose? I ask the Minister to reply specifically on that point. The Government have slashed the money to local government for housing by well over half, and have cut Newham's housing investment programme allocation by over £150 million since 1979. That has resulted in an exacerbated housing crisis in Newham, with over 12,000 people on the waiting list and hundreds of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

The borough council can do little. The Government have a responsibility: what are they going to do? I want to hear the answer today.

Finally, I make a proposal of my own. The Government never tire of telling us that the London Docklands Development Corporation is regenerating east London. What has it done to regenerate the National Health Service? A considerable population is growing in Beckton, all of whom will need health care; they will make demands on the National Health Service. There are, of course, plenty of flats for sale in docklands, if one has the spare £350,000 to pay. But the nurses do not. Will the Government take action to see that the development in Docklands not only makes demands on the NHS but also contributes to it? This is one of the few places locally with land available. Will the Government speak to the LDDC now, with a view to building nurses' accommodation in Docklands at low cost? That would attack the problem. It would be a practical idea, and this afternoon we want to hear from the Government some practical ideas. We want to hear not what they cannot do but what they can do.

I look for an assurance that the Minister and her officials will give their full attention to the staffing of the NHS in the borough and that they will take all the action that is necessary to remedy the scandal of the gross and dangerous shortages that exist, and to ensure that the people of Newham have a good, adequately funded, resourced and staffed health care system, on which they know that they can rely.

I look forward to the Minister's reply. She must know that, unless urgent action is taken now, the NHS in my area will slide further into a spiral of decline from which it will be difficult to recover.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): As is the usual courtesy, I congratulate the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) on his success in the ballot and on choosing this subject for today's debate. He has made a number of my points for me, such as pay and Len Peach's suggestions about pay flexibility, but I am afraid that shortage of time means that I shall be unable to answer all his questions. Perhaps he would write to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who I am sure would be interested to hear from him about housing in London.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): What about the boundary point?

Mrs. Currie: If Opposition Members want an answer to some of the questions for which I have responsibility, I hope that they will provide me with an opportunity to give them.

The Newham health authority is one of the best in London. Under the leadership of Sally, Lady Sherman, and all her staff, it is doing an excellent job in caring for the people of east London. It is a caring, thorough and responsible authority. Recently I visited Plaistow hospital for the rededication of the chapel, which was led by Princess Alice. I was most impressed. I understand that substantial improvements in health care have taken place since the Newham district general hospital was opened in 1983.

I am glad to have the opportunity to discuss briefly today the staffing of such an authority. The hon. Gentleman is quite right when he says that there are problems. I have obtained a list of the directly employed staff of Newham health authority at 30 April 1987. If he wishes to have it, I shall arrange for the hon. Gentleman to have a copy of this information. It shows that in certain specialties, not just nursing, there are serious problems. Nursing is the most spectacular simply because large numbers of nurses are employed. The number of budgeted establishment places for trained nurses is 946, but only 752 are in post. The authority is all right for untrained nurses in post. It has 180 out of the budgeted number of 183. The budgeted learners establishment is 250, but only 188 are in post. I suspect that that has much to do with the drop in the enrolled nurse training intake that has taken place recently all over the country.

The authority should have 28 pharmacy staff but it has only 21. It should have 18 operating department assistants but it has only 13. It should have 32 radiographers, but there are only 27. It should have four audiologists, but it has only one. It should have 41 physiotherapists, but it has only 34. The authority has 19 speech therapists, and that is its budgeted number. The authority is very short of occupational therapists. There should be 17 occupational therapists in post but there are only seven.

The authority should have 285 administrative and clerical workers, but there are only 256 in post. I confirm that the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to how difficult it is to attract medical secretaries. That problem exists not just in Newham or in London but in a number of other parts of the country where alternative employment is readily available.

The hospital is all right for library staff; it has one post and one person in post. Seventy-seven of the 90 catering posts are occupied, but there are only 127 domestic and cleaning staff out of an establishment of 151. Portering, linen and transport are all satisfactory. The engineering services are slightly down, but not substantially so, although, of the 18 posts in building services, only 12 are filled. The hospital is up to establishment in garden maintenance and health education services. The problem therefore seems to be specific to certain activities. I note with great interest that some of the unskilled posts seem to be filled and that the problem seems to be in recruiting to fill the skilled posts. If I have time, I shall come back to that.

The authority tells me it has experienced some difficulties in recruiting permanent nursing staff up to the complement, although most of the vacancies are filled with agency nurses, which does not cost more, because the authority is obliged to pay the nurse only at the midpoint of the scale relevant to her qualification. A number of measures have been taken to boost the recruitment of nursing staff. The authority is seeking to remedy the shortage of theatre nurses by pursuing an in-house training programme and, in the long term, by developing links with the English national board's theatre course at the London hospital. The authority has involved itself in a little reverse brain drain by recruiting in Ireland, where it interviewed 500 possible recruits. Eighty-four training places were on offer and 30 applications from trained nurses are now being processed along with a further 280 letters of inquiry. We welcome that development.

The health authority is planning to spend an extra £66,500 in 1987-88 to promote recruitment. In addition to that normal advertising, health authority officers run a weekly job shop at Plaistow jobcentre and plan to extend the scheme to other jobcentres. Resources have been set aside for London Transport and local bus advertising, and efforts have been made to recruit staff in areas of high unemployment such as Liverpool and Yorkshire. There has been a good response to the authority's clerical and secretarial register, which will act as an employment bank.

Therefore, it is not a question of money, and the problem is certainly not to do with the funding that goes to the health authority. In 1982-83, the gross revenue expenditure of the health authority was £30,613,000. This year, the initial cash allocation is over £44 million, which represents a substantial increase and an increase in real terms. The authority's funding this year shows a 4 per cent. change from the previous year.

The problem is not affecting patients. The number of in-patient cases has risen from 21,000 in 1982 to over 22,000 while the number of day cases has increased from 1,600 to 35,000. Added together, those figures show that the number of patients who are treated per year has risen by about a seventh. Out-patient attendances are affected by changes in the arrangements for ear, nose and throat and general surgery and other changes that have been made since the new hospital was opened. However, the waiting list in Newham is very much better. The improvement is among the best in the country. The number of people waiting for urgent treatment dropped

[Mrs. Currie]

from 2,000 on 31 March 1983 to 1,188 on 30 September 1986, the last date for which figures are available, and very few have to wait for longer than the required one month.

Similarly, the number of non-urgent cases has dropped from 1,819 to 1,115. The improvement applies to general surgery, and trauma and orthopaedics, for which the number of non-urgent cases on the waiting list dropped during that period from 532 to 393, and only 64 cases now have to wait more than a year. I accept that that figure is too high, but there has been a spectacular improvement.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry, but there is no time.

Mr. Spearing: There are four minutes left.

Mrs. Currie: With the gaps in staffing that we have seen, but with a substantial increase in funding, a leap in patient treatment and a clearing of waiting lists — an improvement of some 40 per cent.—there are a number of points that are clear and worth putting on the record. *[Interruption.]* The National Health Service staff are clearly all working like Trojans. Since those people are the constituents of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) I hope that he will join me in recognising the extraordinary spectacular efforts that are clearly being put into Newham by all National Health Service staff. Any company—indeed, any establishment—would be proud of the way in which staff are working in that health authority. It is remarkable. I was particularly pleased when I was there to see how good morale was and the cheerful and pleasant atmosphere all those staff had created for patients.

One of two things is happening. Newham may be managing perfectly well without its full "paper" establishment of staff. The authoriy tells me that it is using overtime and agency staff and, as a result, is within 2 or 3 per cent. of establishment. That may be a sensible way to respond to fluctuating need, but management would be wise if it looked at its funded establishment to see whether it has the pattern and teams — the mix — that it still wants, or whether changes are needed. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East agrees that it serves no purpose to put numbers on a piece of paper. But this also raises the question how staff in scarce specialties can be well and effectively used. As a result of today's debate, I shall send the figures to the regional health authority and Lady Sherman and ask if they can give some thought to the sort of questions that I am raising. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support me.

Either Newham is managing perfectly well by managing its staff in a way that does not show on paper, in which case it should be more explicit about it, or it is not managing perfectly well and staff should be recruited.

Mr. Spearing: Boundaries.

Mrs. Currie: My guess is that it is not a matter of boundaries. We find these difficulties in a number of parts of London. Therefore, poaching from other neighbourhoods would not solve the problem.

I was interested recently to meet nurse trainers from the West Lambeth health authority who are making a considerable effort to recruit and train young men and women from the Brixton area—people who do not have the paper qualifications to come into the traditional forms of training but who, they feel, have a great deal to offer the Health Service. They find that they are meeting an enormous enthusiastic response. I have spoken to the chairman of that district health authority about the efforts of those nurse trainers and asked him to support them.

It is significant that Newham is able to recruit people for the unskilled posts but has the most difficulty in recruiting for the highly skilled posts; yet there are supposed to be 300,000 unemployed people in London. Perhaps, as a result of today's discussion, which I welcome, we can draw the attention of all concerned to the question whether our patterns of recruitment and training, particularly in London where these problems seem most acute — and not just in nursing because, as we have demonstrated, the problem seems to be reflected in a number of other jobs — are appropriate to the labour force which is available and which wishes to work for us.

It may well be that nothing much will come out of this, that we shall continue in the same way and that health authorities such as Newham will continue to use overtime and agencies as they have done so far. If they continue to look after more patients and to bring down their waiting lists, I have to say that we should work on results as much as on input.

Perhaps, as a result of today's discussion, a spark has been struck which may help the constituents of not only the hon. Member for Newham, North-East but other London Members and people throughout the Health Service. I am more than willing to have an open mind on these matters and I shall endeavour to take the action which I have described.

3.3 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister has not answered the central points put by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) about the recruitment of nurses for an accident and emergency service, about the whole question of boundaries and about adequate incentives for skilled secretaries——

The Question having been proposed after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at four minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 27 April 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Women Police Officers (Lancashire)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of women police officers in the Lancashire constabulary area, and the ranks held, showing the appropriate percentage in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested, as on 31 March 1987, is as follows:

Police rank	*Number of women police officers in each rank*	*Percentage of women in each rank*
Superintendent	1	2·38
Chief Inspector	1	1·45
Inspector	2	1·25
Sergeant	14	2·76
Constable	245	10·49
Total	263	8·39

Thorpe Village

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to complete the security survey on Thorpe village in the Orchard Park estate, Hull.

Mr. Mellor: The survey is part of a study of the effect of the priority estates project on crime, housing, management and community life on housing estates. Thorpe village is one of five study areas. We hope to complete the Thorpe village survey interviews in June.

Prison Establishments (Chiropodists)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last year for which figures are available arrangements have been made for chiropodists to hold sessions in prison establishments; and in which prisons were such sessions held.

Mr. Mellor: The information held centrally relates only to sessions held on a regular basis. In September 1986 the position was as follows:

Establishment	*Frequency of session*
Bristol	One weekly
Camp Hill	One monthly
Cardiff	One weekly
Drake Hall	One weekly
Frankland	One monthly
Leyhill	One monthly
Lincoln	Two weekly
Liverpool	One fortnightly
Maidstone	One weekly
Manchester	Two weekly
Norwich	One monthly
Parkhurst	One monthly
Ranby	One fortnightly
Styal	One weekly
Wormwood Scrubs	One weekly
Wymott	One weekly

At other establishments sessions are arranged on an ad hoc basis in the light of demand and at the clinical discretion of the medical officer.

Prison Establishments (Mother and Baby Units)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to extend or improve facilities for mothers and babies in prison establishments.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 5 March, at column 689.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the research project by the University of Sussex in three prison department mother and baby units is expected to be completed.

Mr. Mellor: The report is due to reach the Department in February 1988.

Prison Medical Staff

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many medical officers, hospital officers and nurses employed in prisons have attended training courses in health education.

Mr. Mellor: Information in the form requested is not available from central records and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The professional and in-service training received by the staff groups mentioned contains elements relevant to health education. Such education, involving staff in various disciplines, is an ingredient in a number of existing or planned programmes and initiatives.

Restrictive Trade Practices

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Independent Broadcasting Authority has registered a network agreement with the European Economic Community Commission directorate responsible for monitoring restrictive trade practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the IBA takes the view that, as a statutory authority, it is not required to notify such agreements under article 85 of the treaty of Rome.

Prisons (AIDS)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those prisons designated as regional centres for prisoners suffering from AIDS; if he has any plan to increase the number or capacity of such units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Accommodation at Brixton prison and Risley remand centre is already available for the care and support of inmates who develop AIDS and who do not for the time being require the facilities of the National Health Service. A further purpose-built unit of 12 beds is to be provided at Brixton. Our contingency plans also envisage

care and support facilities at other establishments in case of need, but a final decision about their location has yet to be made. At the present time there is no diagnosed case of AIDS in the prison system.

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further representations his Department has received over pensioner households being exempted from the television licence fee.

Mr. Mellor: Since 28 January, when I answered a similar question from the hon. Member at column 250, written representations about the level of television licence fees for retirement pensioners have been received from 46 hon. Members and 278 members of the public. the majority of these representations favour reduced, rather than free, licences for pensioners; a view strongly endorsed by a delegation from Pensioners' Voice which I received on 11 March.

Child Abuse

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further action he proposes to combat child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I intend to issue next month a paper on the use of video technology in trials involving allegations of abuse. The purpose of the paper will be, first, to seek views from outside Government on the detailed operation of the scheme provided for in clause 21 of the Criminal Justice Bill, whereby children will be able to give evidence by video link at such trials. Secondly, the paper will discuss whether a change in the law should permit a more widespread use of video recordings of a child as evidence in these trials. Copies will be placed in the Library as soon as the paper is issued.

I also propose to establish a working group of experts with recent experience in the field of child abuse to review recent developments in the investigations by the police of such cases. The object will be to offer guidance to chief officers of police on best practice, having regard both to the need for the efficient investigation of the allegations and the interest of the child.

Mr. Winston Silcott (Bail)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has completed his inquiries into the circumstances which led, in a recent case, to the grant of bail to Mr. Winston Silcott; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: On 28 May 1985 Winston Silcott was committed in custody for trial at the Central Criminal Court, on a charge of the murder of Anthony Roy Smith. On 31 May 1985 Silcott successfully applied for bail. He was later convicted of the murder, on 6 October 1985, of PC Blakelock. I understand that he has appealed against that conviction. He has also been convicted of the murder of Smith.

The bail application on behalf of Silcot was heard in chambers, and no contemporaneous record is available. This is unsatisfactory. In the absence of such a record, it is impossible to be sure of the detailed circumstances which led to the granting of bail. In particular, it is not entirely clear how closely the court addressed the possibility that the applicant might commit further offences while on bail, or what information the court considered concerning his character, antecedents, associations and community ties.

Decisions on bail are among the most difficult which a court has to take. In 1985, 22 per cent. of those committed for trial were committed in custody, including 88 per cent. of those charged with murder.

Nineteen per cent. of the prison population are now unconvicted, which is double the percentage seven years ago.

We have considered whether procedural or administrative changes are desirable in the handling of bail applications. The Crown Prosecution Service now has responsibility for making representations in respect of all applications for bail in criminal proceedings. With the agreement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, arrangements are now in hand for ensuring that guidance to the Crown Prosecution Service includes the clearest possible instructions on best practice in dealing with bail applications. In addition, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor intends to ensure that increased attention is given to bail in judicial studies and magisterial training. As to court procedure, there are sound reasons why the details of a bail application should not be made widely known to the public. The Government are not so far persuaded that bail applications to the Crown court ought ordinarily to be made in open court, but clearly there is a strong case for requiring that there should be a record of bail proceedings where appropriate. Arrangements will be made for this to be done in suitable categories of case.

We have also looked at the balance which the Bail Act strikes between the need to protect the interests of unconvicted defendants and the need to ensure, as far as possible, that such defendants do not commit offences or subvert the course of justice while awaiting trial. We have considered whether to bring forward proposals during proceedings on the Criminal Justice Bill now before Parliament, for amendment to the provisions of the Bail Act governing the granting of bail. The balance of the Bail Act will be kept under continuous review but we have considered that it would be a mistake to seek to alter that balance as a result of the Silcott case.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House of Fraser

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about his decision to appoint inspectors under the Companies Act to investigate the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of shares in House of Fraser during 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Howard: No.

It is not the practice of Secretaries of State to disclose the reasons for the appointment of inspectors. I can say, however, that I have asked the inspectors to look in particular at the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of shares in House of Fraser plc in 1984 and 1985.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immundodeficiency virus.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *358*]: There are no plans to introduce such screening among staff of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immundodeficiency virus.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *358*]: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April, at column 628.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *358*]: All staff in the Department of Trade and Industry have received individual copies of information and advice about AIDS.

PRIME MINISTER

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Prime Minister if she will consider matching pound for pound from public funds the money raised from voluntary contributions during the past four weeks of International AIDS Day.

The Prime Minister: I congratulate all those who have raised money for AIDS projects through International AIDS Day. This is an entirely private charitable venture. For their part, the Government are undertaking a £20 million programme of public education. A further £7 million has been allocated in 1987-88 for the treatment, care and counselling of victims and infected people. An extra £14·5 million for research over the next three years will be made available to the Medical Research Council. Money has also been provided for the voluntary bodies dealing with AIDS. The need for further funding will be kept under review.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Privatisation (Share Purchases)

Mr. Canavan asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions have taken place in Scotland, and how many are pending, in connection with the purchase or attempted purchase of shares in companies which have been privatised since 1979.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As far as can be ascertained there have been no prosecutions in Scotland in connection with the purchase or attempted purchase of shares in companies which have been privatised since 1979.

TRANSPORT

M65

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest position with regard to the M65 link to the M6/M61; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Investigations by consulting engineers are well in hand. We expect to announce the precise route for the link road in the summer and to publish statutory orders early next year.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received seeking a link from the M65 eastwards to the M1/M62; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received suggestions, principally from Lancashire county council, that a new link might be needed, but we have no proposals. The existing A6068 route eastwards from M65 is a lightly trafficked local authority road on the primary route network.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to upgrade the link between the M66 and M65 to motorway standards.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The existing high standard dual carriageway link, completed in 1985, was designed to cater for existing and future traffic requirements.

M62

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on potential for traffic growth on the M62 across the Pennines.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The M62 section across the Pennines, soon to be improved by the addition of climbing lanes, can accommodate substantial traffic growth. We plan to widen the busy section of the motorway north of Manchester.

Driving Tests

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the average waiting time for a driving test at each driving test centre in Lancashire in the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not readily available. The waiting times in April for the last three years were:

Centre	*1985 Weeks*	*1986 Weeks*	*1987 Weeks*
Blackburn	11	15	13
Blackpool	11	10	7
Chorley	8	10	11
Heysham	12	15	10
Nelson	11	14	8
Preston	10	12	7

Figures for earlier years are not available.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving tests have been conducted at each driving test centre in Lancashire in each of the last five years; and what the percentage failure rate has been in each case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures are as follows:

Centre	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Number of tests conducted	Percentage of failure rates	Number of tests conducted	Percentage of failure rates	Number of tests conducted	Percentage of failure rates	Number of tests conducted	Percentage of failure rates	Number of tests conducted	Percentage of failure rates
Blackburn	8,918	48·0	8,380	48·5	6,659	46·6	8,752	48·7	8,376	50·0
Blackpool	9,271	48·8	8,671	45·6	8,196	43·3	8,045	42·2	8,648	40·0
Chorley	2,626	47·0	3,918	44·3	4,083	45·3	4,292	43·5	6,240	46·0
Heysham	5,769	50·8	4,464	48·0	4,441	48·5	3,986	48·0	4,360	46·0
Nelson	7,270	47·5	5,117	41·9	4,914	44·8	5,855	47·0	6,634	47·0
Preston	6,123	51·2	5,868	50·0	6,806	49·2	8,122	46·8	7,571	42·0

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving test centres there are in Lancashire; where they are sited; and how many test examiners are employed at each centre.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are six driving test centres in Lancashire, sited and staffed as follows:

Centres	Examiners employed (1 April 1987)
Blackburn	6
Blackpool	6
Chorley	5
Heysham	3
Nelson	4
Preston	6

Rail Commuter Services

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the numbers of commuters using rail services from Essex into London in each of the past five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: Specific data on passengers travelling from Essex into London are not available. However, the figures for the number of passengers arriving in the morning peak at Liverpool Street and Fenchurch Street stations for the past five years are as follows:

Thousands

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Liverpool Street	62	58	58	58	64
Fenchurch Street	27	28	28	28	29
Total	89	86	86	86	93

Note: These figures include commuters from all of Essex, some East London suburbs, and small areas of Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire.

Motorway Barriers

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer in the *Official Report* of 8 April, *Official Report* column *249* relating to motorway barriers he will state what proportion of central barriers construction contracts will be covered by his proposed sample check of 150 miles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 150 miles of detailed checks cover some 36 separate sections of motorways constructed between 1958 and 1976. Continuous central reserve safety fences were not provided on motorways until after 1970, and were added to motorways constructed prior to this date under contracts arranged locally. The information requested is not readily available. It is estimated the sample should cover about 20 per cent. of central barrier construction contracts.

Aviation (Competition)

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has now heard from the Civil Aviation Authority following his request to it to hold consultations with the airline industry, in order to ensure a proper framework for free and fair competition in British aviation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority's consultation paper on safeguards against monopolistic and anti-competitive behaviour was issued on 22 January. Consultees were originally given until 31 March to respond, but, in view of the complexity of the issues and the need to ensure that they are given the fullest consideration, individual requests for further time to submit a response have been granted. The authority expects that all submissions on this consultation, and on the parallel consultation on market entry, will have been received by the end of May.

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy on the encouragement of competition in the British airline industry and strengthening the role of other airlines as competitors to British Airways.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are committed to a sound and competitive multi-airline industry and to the promotion of fair competition in all markets, so long as the United Kingdom's interests are not prejudiced. This policy offers British airlines, with adequate resources, opportunities to provide competing services and thus to strengthen their position. It is also the aim of the policy that the United Kingdom civil aviation industry as a whole should continue to include airlines strong enough to compete aggressively against foreign carriers.

It is essential for the continued success of the Government's policy that there should be effective safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour. The Civil Aviation Authority, at our request, is reviewing the information available to it on airlines' activities and whether that information should be improved, in consultation with the air transport industry, its users and others. The authority is also consulting on the question of market entry.

Coaches and Minibuses (Seat Belts)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to make it a legal requirement that

persons on the exposed seats of new coaches and minibuses to which seat belts are to be fitted will be obliged to wear those belts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. We aim to encourage their voluntary use.

Pacer Units

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library information on the anticipated reliability and frequency of servicing of pacer units at the time of British Rail's purchase of these units; what information he has on the extent to which these expectations have been met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: These are management matters for BR, and the Government do not receive the type of information requested. I understand, however, that BR has experienced certain problems in the operation of their pacer units. Where these difficulties have not already been overcome, BR is confident that they can be resolved.

Inter-City Services

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, he will discuss with British Rail appropriate definitions of overcrowding on Inter-City services.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am happy to discuss with British Rail its standards for Inter-City, but it is required to operate this service on a commercial basis and it is for it to decide on the combination of quality, price and provision that best enables it to meet the needs of its customers and to compete successfully with other modes.

Drink-Driving

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a review of the high-risk excess alcohol offender scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We need more results before drawing firm conclusions. The scheme has been running for four years. In the last 12 months the first drivers have completed their obligatory three-year period of disqualification and have had to satisfy the licensing authority that their drink problem is under control.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, commencing in this year's edition of "Road Accidents Great Britain: The Casualty Report", he will publish the proportion of fatalities, by age group, with alcohol levels 0 to 20 mg per cent., 21 to 50 mg per cent., 51 to 80 mg per cent. and those over 80 per cent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is available in tables C4 and C5 on page 23 of the 1985 edition, but not as a detailed cross-tabulation. We will consider this suggestion.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to improve methods of data collection in relation to official statistics regarding the number and proportion of fatalities resulting from accidents where excess alcohol was identified as a major contributory factor.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Coroners' reports contain information on blood alcohol levels of fatalities. This is summarised in "Road Accidents Great Britain: The Casualty Report". This book also contains information on breath tests of drivers involved in accidents. The number of such tests administered is a matter for the police.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the construction of the Channel tunnel will have any impact on war graves or cemeteries containing war graves in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Mitchell: The construction of the Channel tunnel will have no impact on war graves or cemeteries containing war graves in the United Kingdom, though the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has, of course, been kept informed of the plans.

A423 Stubbings Bypass

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with regard to his decision on the A423 Stubbings bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's report following the A423 inquiry is still being considered. I hope to make an announcement this summer.

ENVIRONMENT

Widdicombe Report

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department is replying to all those organisations which have submitted observations on the Widdicombe report.

Dr. Boyson: We have received nearly 400 responses to our invitation for comments on the Widdicombe report. The Department has acknowledged each one, but will not be responding individually to the various comments and observations contained in them. I can, however, assure the hon. Member that my right hon. Friend will take proper account of the responses in his consideration of the report and its findings.

Housing Grants

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of housing grants to the private sector were mandatory grants in 1979 and each subsequent year *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the north-west region, *(c)* in Lancashire, *(d)* in Burnley and *(e)* in Pendle.

Mr. Tracey: The information reported by local authorities is available in the form requested only from 1981-82.

Capital Expenditure on Mandatory Grants as a Percentage of all Expenditure on Renovation Grants

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
(a) England	21·4	16·9	10·8	17·2	25·5
(b) North West Region	15·4	14·8	6·2	10·3	15·5
(c) Lancashire	25·9	16·4	7·0	10·3	19·2
(d) Burnley	63·4	43·5	5·2	15·8	50·7
(e) Pendle	23·6	16·9	13·0	15·6	20·0

House Building (Grimsby)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were built each year in Grimsby since 1979.

Mr. Tracey: Reported completions of dwellings in Great Grimsby appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics", which are available in the Library.

Year	*Issue Number*
1979	59
1980-83	73
1984	77
1985	78
1986[1]	80

[1] First nine months

County Hall, Wakefield

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has had discussions with the chairman of the West Yorkshire Residuary Body about the district valuer's assessment of the value of county hall, Wood street, Wakefield; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the West Yorkshire Residuary Body regarding the sale of county hall, Wood street, Wakefield; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he expects the West Yorkshire Residuary Body to make its decision on the sale of furnishings and contents of the county hall, Wood street, Wakefield;

(4) when he expects the West Yorkshire Residuary Body to make its decision on the sale of the county hall, Wood street, Wakefield.

Dr. Boyson: I have discussed the sale of county hall with the chairman of the residuary body and I understand that marketing should soon be completed.

Acid Rain

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report on the work undertaken with the UNECE Geneva convention on long-range transboundary air pollution by the group of experts on cost and benefit analysis into an economic assessment of the acid deposition problem in the United Kingdom; and if he will provide details of conclusions which the group has reached.

Mr. Waldegrave: The executive body for the UNECE convention on long range transboundary air pollution has given the group of experts on cost and benefit analysis a wide-ranging remit to develop and apply appropriate economic methodologies to the evaluation of alternative abatement scenarios, for the ECE region as a whole and not specifically the United Kingdom. The group has had two formal sessions and has not yet reached conclusions, but these will be made available in due course.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the emission scenarios for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons and other pollutants which are being used for cost-benefit analysis of the acid deposition problem in the United Kingdom within the context of the UNECE Geneva convention on long-range transboundary air pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: The executive body for the convention on long range transboundary air pollution adopted the following sulphur dioxide emission scenarios for the ECE region as a whole at its second session in September 1984, taking 1980 emissions as the base level:

Scenario 1	No additional sulphur control measures to *(a)* 1995 and *(b)* 2010.
Scenario 2	Maintain base level emissions to *(a)* 1995 and *(b)* 2010.
Scenarios 3 in 4 and 5	10, 30 and 50 per cent. respectively, reductions base level emissions by *(a)* 1995 and *(b)* 2010.

No emission scenarios have yet been adopted by the executive body for nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons or other pollutants.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in full in the *Official Report* the text of the United Kingdom's sulphur dioxide abatement programme as provided to the group of experts on cost and benefit analysis within the UNECE Geneva convention on long-range transboundary air pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: No such programme has been provided to the group of experts on cost and benefit analysis. Research work being undertaken for my Department on the development of economic evaluation models in the context of United Kingdom domestic policy have been used as a substantial input to the work of the group. It is intended to make the results of this research available in due course.

Estate Action

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his approval for the Thorpes scheme on the Anchor park estate under the estate action programme.

Mr. John Patten: Estate Action is considering the local authority's outline application for additional resources to carry out improvement works linked to more localised management on the Thorpes part of the Orchard Park estate in Hull, together with bids from other authorities.

Local authorities will be advised shortly which outline schemes they should work up as firm bids for Estate Action support. Formal approval of schemes will follow once local authorities have consulted tenants fully and produced satisfactory detailed schemes and costings in line with their outline proposals.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet completed his consideration of the report sent to him on 20 April by the Greenpeace organisation on the pollution of the North sea by nitrates and other agricultural based chemicals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not yet.

Renovation Grants

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider modification of the criteria upon which renovation grants are considered so that, in addition to the condition of a dwelling, the needs of the applicant can be considered; what representations he has received from local authorities and others in this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Local authorities already have discretion to take into account a number of factors other than dwelling condition, including the needs of the grant applicant. We are considering changes to the system to reflect more directly applicants' needs and resources, in the light of responses to the Green Paper "Home Improvement — A New Approach" and subsequent representations.

Rana Heterodactyla and Rana Tigrina

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department keeps on the importation of rana heterodactyla and rana tigrina; if he will give figures on the countries of origin; and if any conditions are imposed by United Kingdom authorities in the methods of slaughter.

Mr. Waldegrave: I assume the hon. Member is referring to rana hexadactyla and rana tigerina. International trade in these species has been monitored since 1 August 1985 under the terms of the convention on international trade on endangered species and statistics of imports from non-EC countries have since then been maintained by my Department.

From 1 August 1985 to date, 3,629 kg of rana hexadactyla legs and 200 kg of rana hexadactyla meat have been imported from India. There have been no imports of rana tigerina.

No conditions relating to methods of slaughter are attached to import permits, which are imposed for conservation reasons. There is, however, an internationally recognised code of practice relating to the processing of frogs legs to which, I understand, the Indian Government subscribe.

Mixed Football

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will discuss with the Football Association the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy on equal opportunities of the FA's rule forbidding mixed football; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Football Association and the Women's Football Association both encourage the participation of everyone in the game. As with most physical sports, however, the view of both associations is that while very young children of either sex may compete on equal terms, the interests of competitive football are best served by separate competitions for men and women at the junior and senior level. I see no need to offer advice to the FA or the WFA on this view or any inconsistency between it and the Government's approach to equal opportunities.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University of Wales

33. **Mr. Foot** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will open immediate discussions with those conducting the affairs of University college, Cardiff about the loss of posts now projected.

Mr. Walden: The University Grants Committee is already in contact with University college, Cardiff about the college's financial position, including its current academic and financial plans.

34. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will have discussions with the University Grants Committee regarding the implications for education in Wales of the financial situation of the University college of Wales, Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend and I, together with the chairman of the University Grants Committee, met representatives of the University of Wales on 29 January to discuss aspects of the funding of the university.

St. Saviours, Ealing

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to allocate funds for the improvement programme planned for St. Saviours, Ealing.

Mr. Dunn: I cannot at present say when funds might be allocated for this project.

Nursery Education

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish for each of the year since 1978 his estimate of the total number of places available nationally in nursery schools and nursery classes.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the number of places in nursery schools and nursery classes is not collected centrally. The number of full-time and part-time pupils in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools in England each year since 1978 was as follows :

January each year	[1]*Number*
1978	201,337
1979	210,248
1980	215,451
1981	221,590
1982	235,401
1983	247,825
1984	258,601
1985	266,936
1986	272,480

[1]The number of full-time and part-time pupils in nursery schools and nursery classes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to arrange for staff in his department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to her reply, 30 March 1987, c. 344-45]:* No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether any current or former staff of his department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to her reply, 30 March 1987, c. 344-45]:* I would refer my hon Friend to the answer given by my hon Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her reply, 30 March 1987, c. 344-5*]: In April 1986 the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the chief medical officer, DHSS, circulated all Departments with guidance to managers and model notes for staff. This Department drew on those notes in producing advice to staff through the medium of an office notice. I understand that a copy of the central guidance is available in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Envelopes

Mr. Speller asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of the larger size of brown manilla envelopes supplied for use by the House of Commons; what representations he has received concerning the number of such envelopes which have broken in the post; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The estimated cost of the brown post-paid envelopes, code number 131, supplied for right hon. and hon. Members use during the period March 1986 to April 1987 was £42, 572·60. This amount includes postal charges at first-class rates.

The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee at its meeting on 19 May last year considered the feasibility and cost of stocking more robust brown envelopes and decided that orders should be placed on an experimental basis for a stronger self-seal brown envelope of 120g/m2 code number 23-115. These are being tried out by the Committee Office and the results of the experiment will be reported to the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee shortly.

ENERGY

Waste Conversion

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Energy what funds he has made available, and to which local authorities in Scotland for the conversion of domestic and industrial waste into fuel.

Mr. David Hunt: The Energy Efficency Office has funded research and development and demonstrations of the conversion of domestic and industrial waste into fuel, to the value of £3,134,000 in the United Kingdom.

No local authorities in Scotland have applied to my Department for funding, but our energy technology support unit is monitoring the performance of a pilot refuse derived fuel plant operated by Glasgow district council.

Sizewell B

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current estimate of the Central Electricity Generating Board for the capital cost of the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the CEGB that its latest estimate is £1,245 million in 1982 prices, the price basis used by Sir Frank Layfield. This includes substantial costs incurred because of the time the CEGB had to wait for a decision; these are a function of the inquiry process rather than the type of station.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Conscientious Objection

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the draft recommendation and report prepared by the Steering Committee for Human Rights of the Council of Europe on conscientious objection to compulsory military service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe supported the draft recommendation and report which were adopted by the Committee of Ministers' Deputies on 9 April 1987.

Immigrant Workers

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent changes there have been to the rights of immigrant workers in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government announced on 16 April revised conditions of employment for foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong, covering conditions of stay, wage levels, and new arrangements for changes of employment and renewal of contract. These revisions followed a Government review of the employment of foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Government also reminded all foreign domestic helpers to observe conditions of stay by not taking on additional work and reminded employers to take out accident insurance for all foreign domestic helpers in their employ.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he has received any assurances from the Government of Sri Lanka that the British citizens working for KMS are not employed in military operations.

Mr. Eggar: No. As I told the hon. member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) on 24 March, we

understand that KMS employs British citizens under a private commercial contract with the Sri Lankan Government to training services to their security forces. We have emphased throughout to KMS and to the Sri Lankan Government alike our view that British subjects should not be engaged in military operations of any kind in Sri Lanka.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c *341-42*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 22 April.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *341-42*]: There are no such plans at present.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involved a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *341-42*]: In April 1986 the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the chief medical officer, DHSS, circulated all Departments with guidance to managers and model notes for staff. This Department drew on those notes and on the Department of Employment-Health and Safety Executive book "AIDS and Employment" in providing notes for staff. I understand that copies of both those pieces of guidance are available in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Wage Rates

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage increase in average full-time male manual and average full-time and part-time female wages in the Borders region since 1979 to the latest figures available, together with the percentage increase in the retail prices index and the equivalent percentage wage rate increases in United Kingdom national terms for the same period.

Mr. Lee: Estimates of earnings in the Borders region are available only for full-time manual male employees.

The information is shown in the table:

Percentage increase April 1979 to April 1986
Gross average weekly earnings

Full-time[1] adult[2] male manual employees	*Per cent.*
Borders region	+101
United Kingdom	+90
Retail prices index (all times)	+80

[1] Whose earnings are not affected by absence.
[2] On adult rates (1979 figures have been adjusted from an age related basis).

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statistical analysis of average wage rates since 1979 *(a)* in the Scottish borders, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The available information on average earnings for the Borders region and the comparable information for Scotland and the United Kingdom is set out in the table:

Gross average weekly earnings—Full-time[1] adult[2] male employees (April)

	£ per week		
	Borders Region	*Scotland*	*United Kingdom*
1979	74·7	93·6	92·9
1980	93·9	114·4	111·5
1981	105·1	124·8	121·6
1982	109·4	136·9	133·5
1983	117·2	145·8	143·2
1983	115·2	143·4	141·2
1984	124·0	156·2	152·3
1985	n/a	164·2	163·2
1986	147·8	173·0	173·9

[1] Employees whose earnings were not affected by absence.
[2] 1979 to 1982 inclusive and the first line of 1983 relates to men aged 21 and over. Second line of 1983 to 1986 inclusive relates to males on adult rates.
n/a Not available.

Health and Safety Executive and Industrial Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General what are the lastest figures he has available for staffing levels, actual and establishment, of the Health and Safety Executive and the Industrial Pollution Inspectorate *(a)* in the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* in Scotland.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety Executive's responsibilities cover Great Britain but do not extend to Northern Ireland. The number of permanent staff in post at 1 March 1987 and planned manpower for 31 March 1987 are as follows:

1. *Health and Safety Executive (Great Britain)*
(including Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate)
(a) Number of staff in post—3,594
(b) Planned manpower—3,677

2. *Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate*
(a) Number of staff in post—48
(b) Planned manpower—58

The Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate operates in England and Wales. On 1 April 1987 the inspectorate transferred from HSE to the Department of the Environment's Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution. Responsibility for air pollution inspection in Scotland rests with Her Majesty's Industrial Pollution Inspectorate for Scotland.

3. *Health and Safety Executive (Scotland)*
(a) Number of staff in post—178
(b) Planned manpower—179

4. *Her Majesty's Industrial Pollution Inspectorate for Scotland*

There were 18 permanent staff in post in the inspectorate on 1 March against a planned manpower of 19.

Borders Region

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General (1) what has been the change in the amount of part-time working in the Borders region since 1979;

(2) what has been the change in the number of manufacturing jobs in the Borders region since 1979;

(3) what has been the change in the number of service based jobs in the Borders region since 1979.

Mr. Lee: My Department's statistics for the region monitor only net changes in employment between census dates. No census was taken in 1979, or 1980, and the most recent figures are for September 1981. The September 1984 census estimates for local areas are not yet available.

"Lifting the Burden"

Mr. Shersby asked the Paymaster General, if he will take steps to publish an up-to-date version of the White Paper entitled, "Lifting the Burden".

Mr. Trippier: "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571), published in June 1985, was followed, in May 1986, by a second White Paper on deregulation entitled "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794). A summary leaflet "Cutting Red Tape" was published at the same time. We expect to publish a further report during 1987.

Training Schemes

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people in (i) Burnley and (ii) Pendle constituencies are engaged in *(a)* the YTS, *(b)* the community programme, *(c)* the job release scheme, *(d)* the enterprise allowance scheme, *(e)* the job splitting scheme, *(f)* community industry and *(g)* the young workers scheme.

Mr. Lee: Not all the figures are available in the precise form requested. However, the available information for Burnley and Pendle at 31 March 1987 is as follows:

		Burnley	*Pendle*
[1]*(a)*	YTS	719	538
[1]*(b)*	The Community Programme	422	465
[2]*(c)*	The Job Release Scheme	164	118
[3]*(d)*	The Enterprise Allowance Scheme	681	
[4]*(e)*	The Job Splitting Scheme	18	
(f)	Community Industry	Nil	Nil
(g)	The Young Workers Scheme	Closed last year 31 March 1986	
[4]*(h)*	The New Workers Scheme (succeeded the Young Workers Scheme)	1,393	

Notes:
[1] Figures for local Authority District.
[2] Job Centre coded area.
[3] South Lancashire area.
[4] Lancashire VET Group area.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* for *(a)* Burnley constituency and *(b)* Pendle constituency (i) the population and (ii) the number unemployed as at 1 January and 1 July in 1979 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information, which is also in the Library. The most recent information on the population in parliamentary constituencies is from the 1981 census of population, which identified populations of 94,078 and 85,744 respectively, present on census night (5-6 April 1981) in the Burnley and Pendle constituencies.

The following table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituencies of Burnley and Pendle on count dates closest to 1 January and 1 July. The comparison is affected by the change in timing of the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

	Burnley	*Pendle*
14 July 1983	6,205	4,700
12 January 1984	6,039	4,689
12 July 1984	5,855	4,499
10 January 1985	5,895	4,720
11 July 1985	6,040	4,803
9 January 1986	6,085	4,839
10 July 1986	6,093	4,914
8 January 1987	5,769	4,534

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what was the number of people unemployed in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle by standard industrial classification when such figures were last available.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed registrants, analysed by the 1968 standard industrial classification, at jobcentres which closely correspond to the Burnley and Pendle parliamentary constituencies in May 1982, the last date for which such figures were collected. These figures are not comparable with the current monthly count of unemployed claimants at unemployment benefit offices.

Unemployed Registrants, May 1982

	Burnley and Padiham Jobcentres	*Barnoldswick, Colne and Nelson Jobcentres*
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	19	31
Mining and quarrying	88	3
Food, drink and tobacco	55	80
Coal, petroleum and chemical products	88	144
Metal manufacture	70	33
Engineering and allied trades	1,379	693
Textiles, leather and clothing	701	836
Other manufacturing	518	352
Construction	633	287
Gas, electricity and water	28	6
Transport and communication	150	85
Distributive trades	652	500
Financial, professional, miscellaneous	789	507
Public administration and defence	165	94
Unclassified by Industry	929	782
Total unemployed registrants	6,264	4,433

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what are the unemployment figures, broken down by male and female and under 25 years, 25 to 50 years and over 50 years of age for each of the last four years for *(a)* Burnley constituency and *(b)* Pendle constituency.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The tables show the number of unemployed claimants in

the age groups requested, analysed by sex, in the constituencies of Burnley and Pendle, for January of each year from 1984. This comparison is affected by the change in the timing of the compilation of the count in March 1986.

Unemployed Claimants, Burnley Parliamentary Constituency

	Under 25 Years		*25-49 Years*		*Over 50 Years*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
January 1984	1,327	805	2,022	775	777	333
January 1985	1,344	753	1,955	798	697	348
January 1986	1,339	746	2,019	860	775	346
January 1987	1,221	646	2,046	805	726	325

Unemployed Claimants, Pendle Parliamentary Constituency

	Under 25 Years		*25-49 Years*		*Over 50 Years*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
January 1984	948	691	1,487	637	640	286
January 1985	891	649	1,516	690	662	312
January 1986	915	674	1,577	769	618	286
January 1987	790	623	1,438	746	630	307

Mr. Peter Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle have been unemployed (i) for more than one year and (ii) for more than two years; and what were the corresponding figures in 1979.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the numbers of claimants who had been unemployed for the durations requested in the parliamentary constituencies of Burnley and Pendle on 8 January 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

	Over one year	*Over two years*
Burnley	2,351	1,466
Pendle	1,687	984

Community Programme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General when he expects to increase the maximum community programme wage for labourers.

Mr. Lee: We keep under review the maximum level of wages which can be reimbursed under the community programme and make changes when this would improve the cost-effective use of taxpayers' money. There are no plans at present to increase the maximum level of reimbursement of wages for participants.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General how many community programme places in the Borders region are expected to be lost as a result of new Manpower Services Commission restrictions on approved places and average occupancy rates.

Mr. Lee: It is proposed that the average number of filled places for the Borders region in 1987-88 shall be 261, compared to 282 during 1986-87.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on Government policy towards reductions in Manpower Services Commission community programme projects in the Borders area in 1987-88.

Mr. Lee: In 1987-88 the community programme will provide jobs for 300,000 people, the same number as in 1986-87. The programme will operate at an average level of about 245,000 filled places over the year, slightly below the current level of 248,000 filled places. At the same time the Manpower Services Commission is seeking to ensure that places are as far as possible targeted on those areas of greatest need and this means that some shifts in the geographical distribution of places will occur. In the Borders area places have been allocated according to the distribution of the numbers of long-term unemployed people within Scotland. This means that there will be an average filled place allocation of 261 places for 1987-88 compared to 282 places during 1986-87.

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General when he expects to reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill's letter of 20 March regarding the Manpower Services Commission's community programmes in inner-city areas in Scotland.

Mr. Lee: I shall be replying to the hon. Member shortly.

Ministerial Visit (Liverpool)

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the visit to Nabisco at Long lane, Liverpool of the Department of Employment Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on Thursday 2 April.

Mr. Lee: I was invited to the Nabisco bakery at Aintree, Liverpool on 2 April to present certificates to a number of YTS managing agents in the locality who had recently gained the status of approved training organisation. The requirement for all YTS managing agents to gain ATO status is an important aspect of the Manpower Services Commission's programme of quality development in YTS.

Earnings

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General when he will reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill's letter of 7 April about disparities in the United Kingdom in the level of earnings.

Mr. Lee: I shall be replying to the hon. Member shortly.

Pneumoconiosis

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General how many persons have to date received compensation payments under the pneumoconiosis, Etc. (Workers Compensation) Act 1979; and what has been the total amount of money paid out under the provisions of that Act since it reached the statute book.

Mr. Trippier: As at 23 April, 4,619 persons have received payments amounting to £26,953,073 since the Act came into force on 4 July 1979.

Aids

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *353*]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General whether any current or former staff of his Department have found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *353*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *353*]: In April 1986 the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the chief medical officer DHSS, circulated all Departments with guidance to managers and model notes for staff. The Department of Employment group drew on those notes and on the Department of Employment-Health and Safety Executive book "AIDS and Employment" in providing notes for staff. I understand that copies of both of those pieces of guidance are available in the Library of the House.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the numbers and average gross earnings in the fiscal year 1987-88 of the median and deciles of full-time male and female manual and non-manual workers.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.
No official forecasts are available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Marine Pollution

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement outlining the nature of his responsibilities for marine pollution; and if, in particular, he will indicate what calculations he has made of the cost of disposing of sewage sludge per wet ton by means of incineration, agricultural application, land fill and sea dumping, respectively.

Mr. Gummer: Under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 my right hon. Friend the Minister is responsible in England for granting licences for the disposal of waste at sea. He is also jointly responsible, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, for granting authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for the discharge of radioactive wastes from licensed nuclear sites and UKAEA premises in England. In addition, under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 we are consulted by water authorities or by the Secretary of State for the Environment about the potential effects on fisheries of proposed pipeline discharges into coastal waters. Comparisons of financial and other costs are more appropriately made in individual cases as they vary considerably according to the circumstances.

Pesticides

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the value of the pesticides sold to farmers for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information on sales of agricultural pesticides to farmers in the United Kingdom is not held by my Department. However, current indications from industry figures suggest annual sales approaching £400 million.

Ex-Spanish Fishing Vessels

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many ex-Spanish fishing vessels are now on the British Register; and what was the total on 1 January.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Thames Barrier

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what occasions in the past month the Thames barrier has been raised in order to prevent flooding in the London area, other than for testing purposes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: During the past month the Thames barrier was raised on Sunday 29 March due to a combination of northerly winds, a high spring-tide, and the level of surge and fresh water flow.

Soft Drinks Regulations 1964

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to revise the Soft Drinks Regulations 1964; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government indicated in their White Paper on "Lifting the Burden" that they would review the Soft Drinks Regulations 1964. This has now been done and I shall be issuing proposals under the Food Act 1984 for revised regulations on soft drinks. These proposals will concentrate only on the following points:

(i) a requirement to declare the fruit or fruit juice content on the labels of soft drinks which are derived wholly or mainly from such sources;

(ii) minimum compositional standards only for soda water and Indian tonic water;

(iii) continuing the present requirements for "low calorie"

drinks;
(iv) continuing the present controls on the maximum amount of saccharin that can be used in soft drinks.

Many of the provisions in the current regulations will be revoked, notably those imposing minimum sugar content requirements and the minimum compositional requirements for fruit-based or fruit juice-based drinks. These proposals are therefore in keeping with the Government's policy of simplifying or removing regulations wherever it is appropriate to do so.

DEFENCE

Service Dwellings

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of service dwellings and official lodgings, showing where they are situated, untenanted for over two months in (i) England, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland.

Mr. Freeman: Records are not maintained in the form requested and such information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, as at 31 march 1987 a total of 4,389 married quarters had been vacant for over one year, of which 3,652 were in England, 66 in Wales, 574 in Scotland and 97 in Northern Ireland. These were situated as follows:

	Number
England	
Royal Navy	
Culdrose	1
Dartmouth	1
Deal	36
Harrogate	3
London	5
Plymouth	185
Portland	16
Portsmouth	102
Preston	8
Taunton	32
Corsham	1
Army	
South East	
Aldershot North	60
Aldershot South	46
Deepcut	34
Mytchett	15
Arborfield	3
Bramley	3
Reading	2
Winchester	10
Bicester	48
Bordon	71
Didcot	15
Chichester	3
Chatham	44
Chattenden	1
Gillingham	8
Shrivenham	53
Ashford	2
Dover	6
Hythe/Lydd	3
Shorncliffe	38
Brighton	13
Medmenham	1
Marchwood	18
Thorney Island	3
North East	
Brancepeth	1
Catterick	16
Driffield	65
Harrogate	3
Hemswell	72
Leconfield	41
Ripon	1
Sheffield	1
Eastern	
Bedford	2
Chelmsford	1
Chilwell	15
Colchester	65
Derby	1
Garats Hay	4
Grantham	1
Lowestoft	1
Melton Mowbray	3
Northampton	4
Old Dalby	6
Peterborough	1
Shoeburyness	25
Thetford	1
Waterbeach	9
Leicester	5
Wimbish	4
London	
Central London	8
West London	12
Mill Hill/Bushey	26
Pirbright	6
Woolwich	13
Caterham	8
Uckfield (Sussex)	12
South West	
Ashchurch	5
Bovington	2
Bristol	1
Bulford	10
Corsham	16
Devizes	13
Exeter	12
Larkhill	16
Middle Wallop	2
South Cerney	7
Tidworth	31
Salisbury/Wilton	15
Warminster/Trowbridge	11
Winterbourne/Gunner	14
Colerne	33
Andover	28
Western	
Hereford	5
Bramcote	23
Donnington	6
Kineton	24
Lichfield	1
Long Marston	16
Shrewsbury	4
Malvern/Worcester	3
Tern Hill	6
Birmingham	10
RAF	
Abingdon	25
Benson	152
Binbrook	9
Boscombe Down	22
Boulmer	2
Bracknell	1
Brampton	36
Brize Norton	16
Catterick	8
Chilmark	1

	Number
Church Fenton	2
Coltishall	4
Coningsby	14
Cosford	83
Cranwell	8
Digby	71
Farnborough	2
Finningley	52
Fylingdales	7
Harrogate	1
Headley Court	5
Hendon	12
Henlow	12
High Wycombe	11
Honington	51
Hullavington	3
Innsworth	28
Leeming	259
Linton On Ouse	110
Locking	32
Lyneham	47
Machrihanish	1
Manston	11
Marham	33
Mount Batten	53
Newton	24
North Luffenham	33
Northholt	22
Oakhanger	1
Odiham	27
Quedgeley	1
St. Mawgan	28
Scampton	158
Shawbury	4
Spadeadam	3
Stafford	13
Stanbridge	105
Stanmore Park	1
Swanton Morley	12
Swinderby	40
Uxbridge	68
Waddington	153
Wattisham	1
West Drayton	2
West Raynham	17
Wittering	55
Wroughton	38
Wales	
Army	
Bridgend	4
Chepstow	20
Pendine	1
Twywn	3
Carmarthen	1
Royal Air Force	
St. Athan	2
Sealand	9
Valley	35
Scotland	
Royal Navy	
Fife	24
Helensburgh	75
Arbroath	7
Prestwick	9
Army	
Aberdeen	44
Shetland	2
Tayside	1
Dunblane	5
Inverness	2
Fort William	1
Edinburgh	99
Kirknewton	203
Glasgow	4
Airdrie/Lanark	32
Dumbarton	4
Royal Air Force	
Buchan	13
Kinloss	32
Leuchars	16
Turnhouse	10
Northern Ireland	
Army	
Ballykelly	23
Lisburn	58
Omagh	16

Of the total number, about 1,000 had been declared surplus for disposal and the remainder were either being held against future deployments or were undergoing or awaiting repairs or modernisation.

W79 Nuclear Missile Shells

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of deployment of the W79 nuclear artillery shells within Northern Army Group.

Mr. Stanley: As was repeated once again by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and by myself in the House on 24 March, at columns 162 and 148 respectively, no decisions affecting the modernisation of theatre nuclear weapons in service with British forces have yet been made. The modernisation of the nuclear artillery of other NATO forces is a matter for the Governments concerned.

Skyflash

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to overcome problems with Skyflash missiles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any current problems with the Skyflash missile.

Defence Quality Assessment Centre (Redundancies)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the calculation of the last day of service for redundant staff at the directorate general of defence quality assessment centre in Birmingham.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The quality assurance centre, Birmingham, was closed on 31 March 1987. The plans for the diversion of work and dispersal of equipment had been based on the cessation of work on that date and no work was possible at the centre after that date. Since no suitable employment could be found for the staff elsewhere, there last day of service had to be 31 March 1987.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements exist within his Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisation, for dealing with his responsibilities

regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Mr. Fowler: My responsibility for health services in London are exercised largely through the four Thames regional health authorities, the relevant district health authorities and the special health authorities. In addition, the family practitioner services are administered by the family practitioner committees which are accountable to me. The exact numbers and deployment of their staff are a matter for the bodies concerned. Arrangements for liaison exist within the Department's organisational structure, but it is not possible to identify directly the amount of staff time devoted solely to London issues.

As regards personal social services, local authorities are required to act under my general guidance. I also have certain specific powers such as those of formal inquiry and inspection and responsibilities such as social work training. In carrying out these functions I am supported by the Social Services Inspectorate regional and central staff and by other headquarters staff. At the inspectorate's London regional office, there are 14 professional staff and nine administrative and secretarial staff primarily engaged in work relating to the London boroughs. It is not possible to identify separately the time spent by other staff on Greater London issues.

My responsibilities for social security in London are carried through by local offices of two London regions. The offices employed 9,890 full-time equivalent staff at 1 March 1987.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services with which Departments and non-departmental bodies his Department, and its related non-departmental public bodies has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Fowler: My Department and the regional, district and special health authorities consult as appropriate with other departments and non-departmental public bodies. No central record is kept of the numerous oral and written consultations which occur.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Mr. Fowler: I have no proposals to change the current arrangements.

Departmental Advertising

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of his Department's advertising and promotional budget is spent on regional and local newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The choice between using national newspapers or regional and local press is dictated by the need to achieve cost effective cover of the target audiences for particular campaigns.

Spending on press advertising by the Department in 1986-87 was £5·1 million of which £315,000 was spent in the regional and local press, representing just over 6 per cent. of the total.

National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of a reduction of one percentage point in the employee's and the employer's national insurance contribution in 1987-88; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1957 the rate of contribution in each case as a percentage of average earnings, together with the standard rate of income tax on earned income.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *197*]: The information in the second part of the question is as follows:

National Insurance contributions expressed as a Percentage of Average Earnings of Males paid Adult Rates whose pay was unaffected by absence

	Employee's Contributions	*Employer's Contributions*[4]	*Standard Rate of Income Tax (per cent.)*
1957-58[1]	2·40	2·00	42·50
1958-59	3·10	2·60	42·50
1959-60	3·10	2·60	38·75
1960-61	3·00	2·50	38·75
1961-62[2]	4·50	4·00	38·75
1962-63	4·40	3·80	38·75
1963-64	5·10	4·50	38·75
1964-65	4·90	4·40	38·75
1965-66	5·10	4·90	41·25
1966-67	4·90	8·20	41·25
1967-68	5·10	10·50	41·25
1968-69	5·50	12·40	41·25
1969-70	5·30	13·60	41·25
1970-71	5·50	13·50	41·25
1971-72	5·50	10·10	38·75
1972-73	5·80	9·30	38·75
1973-74	5·90	6·50	30·00
1974-75	5·90	7·40	33·00
1975-76[3]	5·50	8·50	35·00
1976-77	5·75	8·75	35·00
1977-78	5·75	8·75	34·00
1978-79	6·50	10·00	33·00
1979-80	6·50	10·00	30·00
1980-81	6·75	10·20	30·00
1981-82	7·75	10·20	30·00
1982-83	8·75	10·20	30·00
1983-84	9·00	10·45	30·00
1984-85	9·00	10·45	30·00
1985-86	9·00	10·45	30·00
1986-87	9·00	10·45	29·00
1987-88	9·00	10·45	27·00

[1] National insurance contributions were collected only on a flat rate basis up to April 1961. The percentages given up to then are based on flat rate contributions for men aged more than 18.

[2] Between April 1961 and April 1975 graduated contributions based on earnings were paid in addition to flat rate contributions. The percentages for this period are based on the aggregate of flat rate contributions for men aged over 18 and graduated contributions for those not contracted-out of the graduated pension scheme.

[3] The standard not contracted-out rates of national insurance contributions for employees and employers are used as a basis for each year since 1975-76.

[4] The national insurance surcharge is not included in the employer's contribution. This was payable by most employers from April 1977 up to 1984. The surcharge was levied on employees' gross earnings on the same basis as employers' NICs. It was abolished.

except for local authorities and some related employers, with effect from 1 October 1984. For local authorities the date of abolition was 6 April 1985. The rates were as follows:

	Rate per cent.
From:	
6 April 1977	2·0
2 October 1978	3·5
2 August 1982	2·0
6 April 1983	1·5
1 August 1983	1·0
1 October 1984	0·0

Mrs. E. Hamilton

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be able to reply to the point raised by Mrs. E. Hamilton about the payment of pensions on retirement about which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill wrote on 31 March.

Mr. Lyell: My noble Friend wrote to the hon. Member on 23 April.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for single payments in respect of the exceptionally severe weather were received at Brown house, Burnley benefit office this winter; and how many were approved.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claims is not available in precisely the form requested, but by 21 April 6,702 £5 payments had been made, and 1,093 claims refused, by the Burnley local office.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he now proposes to classify bronchitis and emphysema as industrial diseases.

Mr. Major: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council has conducted an investigation into this subject and I understand that its report will be submitted to my right hon. Friend later this year. Its recommendations will be considered then.

Familial Hyperlipidaemia

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will produce figures for the last three years for each region showing the incidence of patients diagnosed as having familial hyperlipidaemia with particular reference to the sex and age when diagnosed of the patient;

(2) whether he will recommend that tests for familial hyperlipidaemia are included in medical examinations for all members of the armed forces, the police force and the Civil Service.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensioners

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures setting out the components of net weekly spending power in November 1985 and November 1986 for each of a single and married retirement pensioner, assuming *(a)* £15 a week rent and £7 rates and *(b)* £30 a week rent and £10 a week rates, and with the following amounts of income in addition to the state basic pension: £0, £5, £10, £15, £20, £30, £40, £50 and £100, respectively.

Mr. Major: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate what proportion of the beneficiaries of private sector occupational pension schemes who derive entitlement from members who have retired since 1974 have been accorded increments sufficient to compensate fully for rises in the retail price index since the date of award of benefit;

(2) what proportion of the beneficiaries of public sector occupational pension schemes who derive entitlement from members who have retired since 1974 have been accorded increments sufficient to compensate fully for rises in the retail price index since the date of award of benefit.

Mr. Major: Information in the precise form requested is not available. The Government Actuary's 1983 survey of occupational pension schemes provides a summary of the most recent increases awarded to pensioners at the time of the survey. The following information is based on table 9·1 and paragraphs 9·5 and 9·7 of the Government Actuary's survey.

a. Private sector schemes

Increase most recently granted	*Total (thousands)*	*per cent. of total*
Nil, small, or irregular	440	21
2·5 per cent.	90	4
3 per cent.	320	15
4 per cent.	250	12
5 per cent.	550	26
6 per cent. or 7 per cent.	240	12
8 per cent. and over	170	8
In line with retail prices index	40	2
TOTALS	2,100	100

The mean inflation rate for the average period covered by increases granted in 1983 was 4·7 per cent.

b. Public sector schemes

Almost all pensions paid by public sector schemes are uprated in line with increases in the retail prices index, in accordance with the Pensions (Increase) Acts. Of those not governed by the provisions of the Pensions (Increase) Acts, nearly all adopt a similar practice.

Expenditure

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 6 April to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, *Official Report*, column 107, how much of the increase in social security expenditure reflecting a real increase in the average amount of benefit paid is attributable to actual real increases in benefit rates.

Mr. Major: Because of the number of structural changes to the benefit system over this period, and the complicated relationship between the rates of income-related benefits and the actual amounts paid, it would

require substantial work to isolate the effect of real increases in benefit rates. I regret therefore that it would be disproportionately costly to provide this information.

Children (Placements)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many requests were received during the first quarter of 1985, 1986 and 1987, respectively, for placements for young people who had been sentenced under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933; and how many of these had been sentenced for burglary.

Mrs. Currie: The Department received requests as follows:

	First quarter 1985	*First quarter 1986*	*First quarter 1987*
Total			
(i) Referrals	18	27	23
(ii) Sentenced for burglary alone	2	4	3
(iii) Sentenced for burglary and other offences	1	6	5

Research

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the research funded by his Department, and other research of which his Department is aware, into the loss of the senses of smell and taste.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Acute Beds

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year from 1979 to 1986 the total number of hospitals with acute beds and the total number of acute beds in each health district.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be provided without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Health Authorities (Improvement Programmes)

Mr Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year from 1982-83 the value of the cash-releasing cost improvement programmes for each district health authority.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 4 February, at columns *701-702*.

Hospitals (Statistics)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year from 1979 to 1986 the total number of hospitals and the total number of beds in each health district.

Mrs. Currie: For information on bed availability in 1979 and 1985 and numbers of hospitals from 1979 to 1984, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 24 November 1986 at columns *98-106* and my predecessor's reply to him on 16 December 1985 at columns *84-96*. The latest centrally available information on the numbers of hospitals in each district health authority is given in the table.

Number of National Health Service hospitals in England[1]

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	*1985*
Northern Regional Health Authority	
Hartlepool	3
North Tees	2
South Tees	13
East Cumbria	11
South Cumbria	8
West Cumbria	7
Darlington	5
Durham	6
North West Durham	3
South West Durham	8
Northumberland	17
Gateshead	7
Newcastle	13
North Tyneside	7
South Tyneside	6
Sunderland	8
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	
Hull	10
East Yorkshire	12
Grimsby	4
Scunthorpe	10
Northallerton	8
York	12
Scarborough	6
Harrowgate	10
Bradford	20
Airedale	9
Calderdale	4
Huddersfield	6
Dewsbury	6
Leeds Western	10
Leeds Eastern	7
Wakefield	8
Pontefract	5
Trent Regional Health Authority	
North Derbyshire	16
Southern Derbyshire	27
Leicestershire	35
North Lincolnshire	9
South Lincolnshire	13
Bassetlaw	3
Central Nottinghamshire	12
Nottingham	10
Barnsley	4
Doncaster	7
Rotherham	8
Sheffield	26
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	
Cambridge	7
Peterborough	12
West Suffolk	5
East Suffolk	17
Norwich	21
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	9
West Norfolk and Wisbech	7
Huntingdon	2

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	1985
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	
North Bedfordshire	7
South Bedfordshire	7
North Hertfordshire	5
East Hertfordshire	7
North West Hertfordshire	7
South West Hertfordshire	6
Barnet	12
Harrow	3
Hillingdon	6
Hounslow and Spelthorne	5
Ealing	6
Brent	7
Paddington and North Kensington	10
Riverside	11
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Basildon and Thurrock	8
Mid Essex	8
North East Essex	13
West Essex	7
Southend	5
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	9
Hampstead	4
Bloomsbury	17
Islington	4
City and Hackney	10
Newham	6
Tower Hamlets	4
Enfield	3
Haringey	3
Redbridge	4
Waltham Forest	9
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Brighton	14
Eastbourne	8
Hastings	10
South East Kent	9
Canterbury and Thanet	19
Dartford and Gravesham	8
Maidstone	6
Medway	11
Tunbridge Wells	14
Bexley	3
Greenwich	6
Bromley	8
West Lambeth	4
Camberwell	3
Lewisham and North Southwark	7
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	
North West Surrey	11
West Surrey and North East Hants	6
South West Surrey	9
Mid Surrey	9
East Surrey	10
Chichester	6
Mid Downs	8
Worthing	5
Croydon	7
Kingston and Esher	6
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	6
Wandsworth	7
Merton and Sutton	16
Wessex Regional Health Authority	
East Dorset	20
West Dorset	20
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	29
Southampton and South West Hampshire	27
Winchester	16
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	7
Salisbury	8
Swindon	10
Bath	32
Isle of Wight	9
Oxford Regional Health Authority	
East Berkshire	12
West Berkshire	15
Aylesbury Vale	6
Wycombe	7
Milton Keynes	3
Kettering	5
Northampton	7
Oxfordshire	20
South Western Regional Health Authority	
Bristol and Weston	18
Frenchay	12
Southmead	11
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	28
Exeter	30
North Devon	10
Plymouth	26
Torbay	20
Cheltenham	13
Gloucester	23
Somerset	36
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	
Bromsgrove and Redditch	9
Herefordshire	14
Kidderminster and District	10
Worcester and District	11
Shropshire	22
Mid Staffordshire	9
North Staffordshire	21
South East Staffordshire	8
Rugby	3
North Warwickshire	7
South Warwickshire	12
Central Birmingham	11
East Birmingham	1
North Birmingham	8
South Birmingham	8
West Birmingham	8
Coventry	8
Dudley	9
Sandwell	5
Solihull	7
Walsall	6
Wolverhampton	7
Mersey Regional Health Authority	
Chester	6
Crewe	8
Halton	6
Macclesfield	7
Warrington	3
Liverpool	17
St. Helens and Knowsley	5
Southport and Formby	6
South Sefton	2
Wirral	5
North Western Regional Health Authority	
Lancaster	6
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	9
Preston	5
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	12
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	7
West Lancashire	5
Chorley and South Ribble	3
Bolton	6
Bury	7
North Manchester	5
Central Manchester	7
South Manchester	4
Oldham	4
Rochdale	5
Salford	9

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	1985
Stockport	9
Tameside and Glossop	5
Trafford	9
Wigan	6
Special Health Authorities	
The Hospitals for Sick Children	2
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	4
Moorfields Eye Hospital	1
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	1
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	3
The Royal Marsden Hospital	2
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	4

[1] Figures are based on a count of hospitals which provide residential facilities during the year. Day hospitals and clinics are therefore not included.

Correspondence

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be replying to the letter sent to him on 5 March by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, concerning the publication sent to him by the right hon. Member from the Society of Civil and Public Servants and the Civil and Public Services Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: I have written to the right hon. Member today.

AIDS

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he is making to ensure that Government advertisements relating to the AIDS campaign are placed in provincial and local newspapers; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what use the Central Office of Information plans to make of regional newspapers in respect of public information on AIDS.

Mr. Newton: The first stage of the AIDS campaign has been mainly confined to the national press as this remains the fastest way of getting a complicated issue before as large a number of the adult population as possible.

We are now examining the scope for advertising in the regional press as a way of providing a local context for the AIDS public education message and also as a means of reaching the substantial minority which takes a regional or local newspaper only.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 23 March, *Official Report*, column 78, when he expects to complete his consideration of matters raised by the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the Moran case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 7 April at column 149.

Adult Dental Health

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce his decision on the proposed 1988 national survey of adult dental health; how long he estimates arrangements for the carrying out of the survey will take; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) on 19 December 1986 at columns 785-86.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Government have now established a target date for the full implementation, with commencement orders, of every section of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Sections 4, 8(1), and 9 and 10 were implemented on 1 April 1987. With regard to the implementation of the remaining sections, I cannot add to my reply to the hon. Member on 10 March at column *157*.

Guardians ad litem

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many, and what percentage of cases in the Huddersfield magistrates' court takes at least eight weeks to appoint a guardian ad litem and a further eight weeks to report.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the court concerned.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to improve cost estimates for National Health Service treatment of casualties of drinking and driving.

Mrs. Currie: Statistics kept for the first time in 1985 enable us to estimate the cost of National Health Service treatment of drinking and driving casualties in that year. The 1985 cost in England is estimated as £8·4 million.

Population Statistics

Mr. Maucher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate for the years 1987, 2007 and 2027 *(a)* the number of people in the working population, *(b)* the number of people in the retired population, *(c)* the average gross income for employment per member of the working population, and *(d)* the average gross income from pensions per member of the retired population, subdivided between state pensions, occupational pensions and lump sums from occupational pension schemes; with money expressed at 1987 prices and the figures for 2007 and 2027 assuming rates of growth of (i) 1 per cent. per year and (ii) 3 per cent. per year and the impact of personal pensions ignored.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 March 1987, c. *800-801*]: The information is not readily available in the form or for the years requested. Table 1 shows estimated numbers of people in the working population and retired population in 1987-88, 2003-04 and 2023-24. Table 2 shows the estimated average annual gross income from

employment per member of the working population in 1987-88, 2003-04 and 2023-24 assuming an annual average earnings growth of *(a)* 1·5 per cent. and *(b)* 3 per cent. Table 3 shows the composition of pensioners' incomes in 1985.

Table 1

Thousands

	Working Population[1]	*Retired Population*[2]
1987-88	27,550	9,620
2003-04	27,400	9,780
2023-24	26,750	12,160

Table 2 estimated average gross income from employment[3]

	£ per annum 1·5 per cent. earnings growth	*£ per annum 3 per cent. earnings growth*
1987-88	7,200	7,200
2003-04	10,000	12,700
2023-24	13,500	22,900

Table 3 Composition of Pensioners' Incomes 1985[4]

	£ per week at 1985 prices
Retirement pension and income related benefits	50·80
Other benefits	3·20
Occupational pensions	18·60
Investment income	12·80
Employment earnings	5·80
Total gross income	91·20

[1] Total of those in employment or self-employment and unemployed included in Department of Employment monthly published statistics. Assumptions for the number of unemployed in 1987-88 are derived from the Government Actuary's report on the drafts of the Up-rating and Re-rating Orders 1986 (Cm. 24); 6 per cent. unemployment assumed for 2003-04 and 2023-24.

[2] Those in receipt of a contributory basic state retirement pension. Excludes those who retire before minimum state pension age or who are in receipt only of non-contributory or graduated pensions.

[3] Includes income from self-employment. Assumptions for 1987-88 earnings levels are derived from the Government Actuary's report on the drafts of the Social Security Up-rating and Re-rating Orders 1986 (Cm. 24).

[4] Derived from family expenditure survey. Figures are average income for pensioner tax units, which may be either single pensioners or married couples.

Sources:

1. Report by the Government Actuary on the drafts of Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order 1986 and the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) (No. 2) Order 1986 (Cm. 24).

2. Social Security Act 1986: Report by the Government Actuary on the Financial Effects of the Bill on the National Insurance Fund

Benefits

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants in Cleveland receive invalidity benefit without also receiving supplementary benefit, or housing benefit supplement broken down by the following offices (i) Hadrian house, Eston, (ii) Crown house, Hartlepool, (iii) Royal house, Middlesbrough, (iv) Dawson house, Redcar and (v) Bridge street, Stockton.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not held.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate, for each region, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole of *(a)* the numbers claiming supplementary benefit, *(b)* the numbers dependent on claims for supplementary benefit, *(c)* the numbers claiming housing benefit, and *(d)* the numbers dependent on claims for housing benefit.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987, c. *411*]: The latest available information is as follows:

(thousands)

	Scotland	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*
Number of supplementary benefit claimants[1]	564	290	184	5,156
Number dependent on supplementary benefit[1]	832	501	372	8,646
Number of housing benefit claimants[2]	788	372	197	7,317

Note: No information is available on the number dependent on housing benefit.

[1] At February 1986.

[2] At April 1987.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from local authorities about the adequacy of his subsidy allocation for preparation costs to be incurred for the introduction of changes to the housing benefit scheme in April 1988.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *595*]: It was announced last September that the Government would make £25 million available to local authorities during the 1987-88 financial year for preparation costs. After consultation with the local authority associations, the Department wrote to some 480 local authorities on 2 February inviting each authority to submit estimates of its costs, and giving an indicative figure for the amount of its individual payment calculated by reference to its current administration costs and caseload. The indicative figures were based on an allocation of £20 million of the £25 million sum, the remaining £5 million being held back to be allocated in the light of the responses.

Just over 400 authorities have responded and some 80 authorities have not responded. Of those who have responded, about 20 have written to say that they are content with the indicative figure sent to them and it is assumed that the same applies to those who have not responded. Some 30 have expressed specific reservations about the adequacy of the indicative amount in their case. The remaining authorities have not made any specific representations but have submitted estimates which exceed their indicative amount. Decisions on the allocation of the

full £25 million will be made in the light of all the responses. Each authority will be informed of its allocation shortly.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the future of teachers' pay and conditions in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: A joint meeting of the Northern Ireland teachers' salaries and conditions of service negotiating committees adjourned on 15 April after three days of negotiations with an undertaking by all four of the teachers' unions represented that they would present details of the composite package of proposals for pay and conditions of service to their members. Three of the unions intend to ballot their members, the results of which will not be known before 18 May. It has been provisionally agreed that the negotiating committees will reconvene on that date.

SCOTLAND

Safety Rails and Gates

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to report on his discussions with Strathclyde regional council social work department and Glasgow district council housing department about the provisions of safety rails and gates fitted in patients' homes about which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill wrote to him on 16 March.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his question on 22 April 1987 at column *568*.

National Heritage

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the associations which are to receive grant assistance in 1987-88 under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 3 April at column *646*.

Education (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the capital allocations for education in the highland region for each financial year from 1977-78 to the present; and if he will express those allocations in addition as a percentage of Scottish annual totals.

Mr. John MacKay: the information is set out in the table.

Year	*Capital allocation for educational building in Highland region (£000)*	*Percentage of total allocation in Scotland*
1977-78	7,126	9·93
1978-79	2,622	4·71
1979-80	2,155	4·02
1980-81	2,096	3·92
1981-82	3,190	5·67
1982-83	2,525	5·21
1983-84	1,095	2·40
1984-85	660	1·64
1985-86	1,545	3·07
1986-87	1,315	2·86
1987-88	2,890	5·65

Refuse (Fuel Conversion)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with, and what financial assistance he has made available to, local authorities on the conversion of domestic and industrial refuse into fuel.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Office has not made financial assistance available to local authorities in respect of the conversion of waste into fuel. The only authority in Scotland operating such a process is Glasgow district council. The Govan plant has been funded using district council resources, but a grant of £10,000 was made available by the Department of Trade and Industry to enable the Warren Spring Laboratory to carry out combustion trials.

Zircon Satellite (Police Operation)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of distributing to the press copies of the telex he sent on 10 April to the hon. Member for Linlithgow concerning the police operation at British Broadcasting Corporation offices in Glasgow.

Mr. Ancram: The cost of distributing copies of the letter by telex was about £11. Given the geographic spread of the main Scottish media outlets telex distribution is commonplace and cost-effective.

Agriculture and Fisheries (Review)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the terms of reference of the review of the functions of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland; and who will conduct the review.

Mr. John Mackay: The review of the functions of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland in the area of crops, plants and plant health announced earlier this month will be carried out by officials of that Department under the following terms of reference.

1. To examine critically all the relevant requirements (including the legal, technical and scientific requirements) of the existing systems concerning crops, plant health and pesticides, particularly as they affect areas where costs are recovered from the agricultural industry.
2. Taking account of the requirements identified in 1, to:
   (a) participate in the United Kingdom review of the PBR/NL and seed certification systems and to take cognisance of the results of that review;
   (b) consider in so far as they might affect Scotland the possible repercussions of any recommendations that might stem from the review referred to at *2(a)* above;
   (c) review the operation of the seed potato regulations

and the related systems for the production of pre-basic potato material and basic seed potatoes;

(d) review the operation of plant health controls (particularly as they affect seed potatoes) in relation to imports and exports, quarantine, PCN and other indigenous pests and diseases;

(e) review the operation of the soft fruit certification schemes;

(f) review the operation of the enforcement functions in relation to seeds and seed potatoes and to the control of pests (including the misuse of chemicals in the control of vertebrate pests) and the use of pesticides;

(g) review the R and D requirements (within the ASS or elsewhere) in support of the functions described at *2(a)* to *(f)* above.

3. To examine against the future needs of the agricultural industry and consumers any possibilities for rationalising these systems by whatever means might seem the most likely to be effective in terms not only of cost and sound administration but of scientific rationale; and to make recommendations.

M8 (Improvement Programme)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the expected completion date for the improvement programme for the Baillieston to Newhouse section of the M8 motorway; and what are the anticipated total costs.

Mr. Ancram: The current programme assumes a works start in 1990 (subject to the satisfactory conclusion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance), with completion expected in 1993. Total cost of the scheme is estimated to be about £30 million.

Prisons (Disturbances)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what inquiries he has instituted into the recent disturbances at Her Majesty's prison, Perth, and other penal institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have, as is usual in such cases, called for reports from the governors. As the incidents referred to are currently the subject of police investigations and possible court proceedings, it would be inappropriate for me to make a statement at this stage.

Arts (Financial support)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the performing arts by each local authority in Scotland;

(2) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the performing arts by local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the arts by local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Based on all local authority financial returns on their final outturn expenditure for 1985-86, total expenditure on the arts was £81·4 million.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the arts, excluding libraries, by local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Based on all local authority financial returns on their final outturn expenditure for 1985-86, total expenditure on the arts, excluding libraries, was £6 per capita.

Nuclear Disasters

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Strathclyde police as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Hunterston, *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles, *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population within (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles of the power station, *(c)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of the population of Glasgow, *(d)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high risk groups from Glasgow, *(e)* what time estimates have been made for evacuation of low mobility groups from Glasgow, and *(f)* what time estimates have been made for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Glasgow; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculation of any such time estimates to be placed in the Library;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Chapelcross *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles, *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population within (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles of the power station, *(c)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of the population of Dumfries, *(d)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high risk groups from Dumfries, *(e)* what time estimates have been made for evacuation of low mobility groups from Dumfries, and *(f)* what time estimates have been made for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Dumfries; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculation of any such time estimates to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c. *184*]: The precautions taken in the design and construction of nuclear installations in this country and the very high safety standards applied in operating and maintaining them make it highly unlikely that accidents will occure which might significantly affect the public. But however remote the risks, all operators of nuclear installations are required by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (HMNII) of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as a condition of their site licences to prepare emergency plans, including those for dealing with an accidental release of radioactivity. The same requirement also applies to the sites of the Atomic Energy Authority. These plans, on which the police and other involved bodies must be consulted, are tested regularly in exercises monitored by HMNII. They cover both emergency procedures at the site and offsite arrangements to protect the public, including monitoring and evacuation within areas which vary according to the nature of the installation. These plans are capable of extension in the improbably event of this proving necessary, but the HSE does not consider that detailed plans covering a wider area are justified. It believes that a balance needs to be struck between detailed plans that are sufficiently extensive to cope with a serious accident and the unjustified use of resources involved in planning for improbable accidents. This approach was specifically endorsed by Sir Frank Layfield in his report on Sizewell. It follows that the specific calculations and assessments sought have not been made.

In an announcement on 18 December, *Official Report*, column 612, following the first stage of a thorough review of existing plans and procedures in the light of experience of the Chernobyl accident, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister concluded that existing plans continue to provide a valid basis for the response to any accident in the United

Kingdom. In announcing his consent to the planning application for Sizewell B, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy accepted the Layfield report's recommendations relating to emergency planning. These will be taken fully into account in the continuing work on the Government review.

WALES

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of water rates in the area of the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is the responsibility of the authority to decide the level of its charges in the light of its revenue and capital requirements.

Health Education

5. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on health education in Wales in the light of the document, "The Health Divide," a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards reducing inequalities in the health of the people of Wales in the light of the report "The Health Divide," a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend's policies are aimed at improving the health of all the people in Wales. We have increased total cash resources available to health authorities in Wales in the current year by 7·9 per cent.; revenue provision to health authorities in Wales has increased by 33 per cent. in real terms since 1979; and we have invested £495 million in the capital estate since 1979; the number of staff directly concerned with patient care is up 13·5 per cent. since 1979 and tens of thousands more patients are being cared for in Wales today than was possible in 1979.

Marginal Land (Anglesey)

8. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to the European Commission about marginal land on Anglesey.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No such representations have been made to the European Commission since the approach that led to some of the land on the island being classified as having LFA status in 1984. The time for a further approach to the European Commission about Anglesey LFA boundaries will be after the current consideration of representations and appeals has been completed later this year.

Patients (Waiting Lists)

14. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state, for the latest available year, the number and percentage of hospital appointments that were not kept; and what this represented in costs to the Health Service and in increasing waiting lists.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist).

Lakes and Rivers (Acidification)

17. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those lakes and rivers in Wales that are showing signs of acidification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Although the areas of Wales most susceptible to acidification have already been identified from rainfall patterns, the water chemistry of the lakes and rivers, and the underlying geology, the Welsh Office is presently carrying out a base line study of lakes in central Wales which will identify specific acidification and other characteristics.

Farmers Union of Wales

18. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the president of the Farmers Union of Wales; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I met the president of the Farmers Union of Wales, in company with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on Thursday 9 April. Our discussions centred on the European Commission's price proposals for 1987-88, with particular reference to the milk, beef and sheep sectors and agrimonetary issues.

Japanese Investment

21. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to by how much Japanese inward investment in Wales has increased since 1979; what Japanese inward investment decisions have been monitored by his Department during April; and what is the policy of his Department towards such investment.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Detailed information is not available from 1979, but since WINvest was established on 1 April 1983 Wales has secured four new inward investment projects from Japan, 15 expansion projects and one joint venture involving a total of over 5,200 jobs and a capital investment of some £125 million. WINvest keeps in close touch with potential inward investors from Japan to ensure that they are aware of the benefits of investing in Wales. The policy remains that Her Majesty's Government welcome beneficial inward investment from Japan.

Road Works

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been spent on major road improvements on the A55 trunk road in Wales during each of the past seven years, respectively; and what is the scheduled expenditure on this road for the next four years, respectively, including the present financial year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Outturn expenditure

	£ million
1980-81	16·591
1981-82	18·951
1982-83	50·661
1983-84	62·807
1984-85	40·412
1985-86	29·404
1986-87	[1]34·638

[1] Provisional.

Planned expenditure at November 1986 prices

	£ million
1987-88	60·528
1988-89	[1]63·696
1989-90	[1]63·676
1990-91	[1]57·138
Later years	[1]19·686

[1] These figures exclude expenditure on land which is expected to amount to some £12 million in the years beyond 1987-88.

Expenditure in 1987-88 and later years on schemes not yet in progress will depend on the completion of design and statutory procedures and the availability of finance.

House Improvement Grants

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount paid in house improvement grants in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Neath, respectively, in the financial year 1978-79; and what was the corresponding position in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The amounts paid on completed renovation grants for Wales and for Neath during 1978-79 were £8,492,600 and £383,000 respectively. The Wales total for 1986-87 is not yet available, but the amount for Neath is £428,000. The Wales figure for 1985-86 is £54,884,200, while for Neath it is £692,700.

Council House Building

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many new council houses were built in the financial year 1978-79 in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Neath, respectively; and what was the corresponding position in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Cardiothoracic Surgery

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made towards the fulfilment of his policy commitments of 1983 in relation to the provision of new facilities in north Wales for cardiothoracic surgery.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest numbers of people unemployed in Wales and in Neath.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 12 March 1987 the total numbers of unemployed claimants in Wales and Neath Borough were 166,000 and 3,677 respectively.

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has made of the number of people in full-time employment in Wales in 1987; and how this compares with the figures in 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The estimated numbers of employees in employment at December 1986 and December 1979 were 678,000 and 864,000 respectively. These figures include all male employees and full-time female employees, but they exclude the self-employed. The number of self-employed is estimated to have risen by 30,000 between September 1979 and September 1986.

Public Rights of Way

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether the reviews of definitive maps of public rights of way in *(a)* Gwynedd and *(b)* Clwyd have been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Neither of the reviews has been completed. Following substantial changes to the review of definitive maps procedure introduced by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 the Secretary of State directed Gwynedd county council in January 1984 to abandon its review. Where a review has been abandoned, the surveying authority has to make an order to show any changes made by the draft map which did not attract any objections. We understand that Gwynedd county council's work on plotting these changes is well under way, although it has taken longer than expected. We hope that the council's work will reach a speedy conclusion.

The review in Clwyd is being carried out under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Countryside Act 1968. The final hearing into Clwyd's review was held on 24 April 1987. Once the Secretary of State's decision on this hearing has been issued all outstanding objections in relation to Clwyd's review will have been determined. Action will then be with the council to produce its definitive map and written statement.

The Arts (Support)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the arts by local authorities in Wales;

(2) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the arts, by each local authority in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. Information about grants by local authorities to the arts is collected and published by CIPFA in "Leisure and Recreation Statistics", (1986-87 columns 171 to 183). This publication, together with those of previous years, is held in the House of Commons Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Privatisation

Mr. Richard Page asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total receipts in corporation tax, dividends and any other income to the Treasury from all the state enterprises after they were moved into the private sector, on a year-by-year basis.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information available from published annual reports and accounts of major privatised companies is given in the table.

List of Treasury receipts from state enterprises since privatisation on a year-by-year basis

£ million

	Date of Privatisation	Year-end	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
British Aerospace	1981	31 December	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax [1]	—	—	8·2	(0·2)	12·2	18·8	48·8
Dividends [2]	—	—	8·2	8·8	13·2	—	—
Interest [3]	—	—	3·6	2·5	2·1	1·5	n/a
Loan repayment	—	—	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	n/a
Per cent. shares held by Her Majesty's Government	—	—	48·43	48·43	48·43	—	—
Cable and Wireless	1981	31 March	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	51·3	17·1	29·2	31·5	10·2
Dividends	—	—	9·0	10·7	6·8	8·0	—
Per cent. shares held by Her Majesty's Government	—	—	50·529	45·381	23·064	22·708	—
Amersham International	1982	31 March	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	—	1·0	1·3	2·1	1·6
National Freight Consortium	1982	30 September	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	—	0·8	1·3	2·3	0·2
Britoil	1982	31 December	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	—	114·5	129·5	175·0	70·4
Dividends	—	—	—	24·5	28·2	—	—
Petroleum Revenue Tax	—	—	—	237·5	322·7	333·5	122·9
Royalties	—	—	—	123·2	144·6	146·0	59·7
Per cent. shares held by Her Majesty's Government	—	—	—	49·0	49·0	—	—
Associated British Ports	1983	31 December	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	—	—	5·4	4·2	n/a
Enterprise Oil	1984	31 December	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	—	—	—	56·4	n/a
Petroleum Revenue Tax	—	—	—	—	—	14·0	n/a
Royalties	—	—	—	—	—	24·4	n/a
Jaguar	1984	31 December	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	—	—	—	16·1	n/a
British Telecom	1984	31 March	—	—	—	—	—
Corporation Tax	—	—	—	—	—	—	529·0
Dividends—Preference	—	—	—	—	—	41·0	63·0
—Ordinary	—	—	—	—	—	116·5	224·1
Interest	—	—	—	—	—	319·6	327·8
Loan repayment	—	—	—	—	—	44·0	61·0
Per cent. shares held by Her Majesty's Government							
—preference	—	—	—	—	—	100·0	100·0
—ordinary	—	—	—	—	—	49·8	49·8

[1] Corporation tax is included in the year in which it is charged to the profit and loss account. Deferred taxation, overseas tax, and VAT are not included.
[2] Dividends are the amounts paid and proposed which are charged to the profit and loss account of each year.
[3] Other income has been listed where the published accounts provide the information.

Earnings and Exports (Statistics)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing (i) the percentage increase in median earnings for full-time adult male manual and non-manual workers in real terms since 1976 and 1979, respectively, (ii) information available to him on the change in United Kingdom relative export prices for manufactures compared to Germany and Japan, together with relevant nominal rates of exchange and (iii) information on the nearest comparable earnings figures for Germany.

Mr. MacGregor: The figures requested are shown in the table.

Percentage increases over stated periods

	Real earnings			Relative export prices of United Kingdom manufactured goods [3]		Exchange rates [3]	
	Great Britain [1]		Germany [2]	Germany	Japan	DM/£	Yen/£
	Manual	Non manual					
1976-86	+6	+20	+12	+22	+7	−32	−57
1979-86	+4	+19	+3	+4	−10	−20	−50

[1] Median earnings, all industries, adult males from "New Earnings Survey" deflated by RPI. Figures relate to April of each year.
[2] Index of average hourly earnings in manufacturing deflated by the consumer price index. *Source*—OECD Main Economic Indicators, for April each year.
[3] United Kingdom export unit value index for manufactured goods divided by corresponding German or Japanese index. All indices measured in a common currency. Derived from data published in the *Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics* and IMF *International Financial Statistics*. Figures refer to 1986Q3, the latest period for which information is available.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the annual growth of (i) manufacturing investment and (ii) manufacturing production each year since 1979 in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the United States of America and Japan, in each case taking the 1979 level as 100.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to two publications from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Gross manufacturing investment figures can be found in *National Accounts, Volume 2* (1986) and manufacturing output data are published in the *Main Economic Indicators* (monthly). Data for the United Kingdom are published in the Central Statistical Office's *Economic Trends* (monthly).

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the rise in work and labour costs in manufacturing each year since 1979, taking the 1979 level as 100, in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the United States of America and Japan, and in the European Economic Community and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development averages.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to table 5.9 of the *Employment Gazette* (monthly), published by the Department of Employment, which shows wages per head in manufacturing, in national currencies, for a number of OECD countries. The Central Statistical Office's *Economic Trends* (monthly) also gives labour costs per unit of output, in dollars, for the largest industrial countries.

Land (Capital Gains Tax)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the amount of revenue forgone in each financial year since 1981-82 as a result of conditional exemption from capital taxes on land allowed following agreement between the Nature Conservancy Council and the owner;

(2) if he will state the total acreage of land *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in the United Kingdom exempted from capital gains tax in each financial year since 1981-82 under agreements reached between the owner and the Nature Conservancy Council providing for reasonable public access.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxable Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply dated 6 April *Official Report*, column *78*, concerning taxable benefits subject to special and general rules, whether he will provide an estimate for each of the three classes of the proportion of the actual value which is assessed to tax in each of the three cases together with a list of the more important items.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the amount of building society holdings in each of the past five years and to date; how many registered building societies there are in the United Kingdom; and how often he meets representatives of the Building Societies Association.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Libraries

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish the spending per capita of local authorities on libraries for the last two years for each authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for public libraries by each local authority in the east midlands responsible for a public library service.

Mr. Luce: Details of the level of financial support per 1,000 population for public libraries by local library authorities are published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in "Public Library Statistics Actuals". No more detailed records are available to my Office.

Local Authority Support

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Arts (1) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the performing arts by local authorities in the west midlands;

(2) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the visual arts by local authorities in England and Wales;

(3) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the arts by local authorities in England;

(4) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the arts by each London borough;

(5) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the arts by each London borough;

(6) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for arts centres by each local authority in Yorkshire;

(7) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the arts by local authorities in England;

(8) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for arts centres by each local authority;

(9) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the arts, excluding libraries, by each local authority in the east midlands;

(10) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the arts by local authorities in the north-west;

(11) whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support for the arts by local authorities in the south-west.

Mr. Luce: Details of the estimated expenditures of local authorities on leisure and recreation services are published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in the annual booklet "Leisure and Recreation Statistics". No records in more detail are available to my Office.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Dickens asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will give his latest estimate of the cost of *(a)* answering an oral question, *(b)* answering a written question, *(c)* printing all questions on the Order Paper and Notice Paper in the 1985-86 Session and *(d)* printing all answers in the *Official Report* in the 1985-86 Session.

Mr. Biffen: The costs in officials' time of replying to questions vary considerably, but the current average cost is estimated at *(a)* £75 for oral answers and *(b)* £45 for written answers. *(c)* During the 1985-86 Session the cost of printing all oral and written questions on the Order Paper and Notice Paper was £842,000, *(d)* the cost of printing all written answers in the daily *Official Report* in the 1985-86 Session was £430,000. The cost of printing all oral answers could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 28 April 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the amount of grant aid being given to each district and county council under regulations 4(1)*(b)* and 5(1)*(c)*, respectively, of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 for establishing, equipping or maintaining emergency centres during the current financial year;

(2) if he will list those district and county councils which have applied for grant aid under regulations 4(1)*(b)* and 5(1)*(c)* respectively of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 to establish, equip or maintain emergency centres during the current financial year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The amount of grant aid to be paid to each county and district council for establishing and equipping emergency centres during the current financial year will not be known until audited claims have been received. However, county authorities have submitted estimates for 1987-88 as shown, and expenditure incurred in accordance with agreed estimates will be eligible for grant aid at 75 per cent. Expenditure on maintaining emergency centres is not eligible for civil defence grant aid.

	Building work		*Equipment purchases*	
	County £	*District* £	*County* £	*District* £
Avon	—	51,500	1,000	28,500
Bedfordshire	14,000	167,000	1,100	—
Berkshire	—	130,300	5,380	6,000
Buckinghamshire	14,000	38,500	11,800	—
Cambridgeshire	—	60,000	4,610	—
Cheshire	92,700	—	4,060	—
Cleveland	—	—	1,860	—
Cornwall	—	155,500	—	—
Cumbria	204,000	—	400	—
Derbyshire	—	—	1,500	4,500
Devon	4,800	188,000	—	—
Dorset	30,400	46,000	9,500	11,500
Durham	7,000	28,000	1,150	—
Dyfed	—	35,000	—	—
Essex	—	—	11,000	45,000
South Glamorgan	17,000	—	4,930	—
West Glamorgan	39,000	—	1,320	—
Gloucestershire	—	115,000	10,000	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	2,708	—
Gwent	—	30,000	8,000	15,000
Hampshire	—	23,500	—	—
Hertfordshire	32,880	—	3,520	—
Humberside	20,000	10,000	4,470	—
Isle of Wight	—	9,000	560	—
Kent	70,000	425,000	10,000	65,000
Lancashire	20,000	126,000	—	—
Leicestershire	—	60,000	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	620	—
London	—	3,451	—	2,660
Merseyside	12,500	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	372,000	—	—
Northumberland	1,680	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	46,000	—	—
Oxfordshire	—	253,300	3,000	21,200
Powys	460	—	1,020	—
Shropshire	—	—	660	—
Somerset	77,300	61,500	—	—
Staffordshire	49,973	97,000	—	—
Suffolk	13,250	2,000	—	—
Surrey	33,500	213,500	—	—
East Sussex	1,800	25,050	—	16,900
West Sussex	5,000	5,000	—	—
Tyne and Wear	2,000	166,781	5,852	—
Wiltshire	4,600	60,680	—	—
North Yorkshire	8,200	50,000	—	—

Prison Establishments (Parking)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of parking spaces *(a)* for staff and *(b)* for visitors at (i) Risley remand centre and (ii) Strangeways prison.

Mr. Mellor: At Risley remand centre 304 parking spaces are available for staff and 66 for visitors. At Strangeways prison, Manchester, a total of 180 parking spaces are available for staff (27 within the main prison and 153 on a temporary basis on the adjacent fenced Croft site); there is at present no official parking space available for visitors, although street parking is available for up to two hours and there are local authority car parks in the area. Future car parking arrangements at Strangeways prison will be considered in the context of the planned major redevelopment of the establishment.

Radioactive Contamination (Police Training)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Suffolk as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing, and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cleveland as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing, and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Durham as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing, and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(4) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Tyne and Wear as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing, and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(5) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Dorset as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing, and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(6) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of East Sussex as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing, and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(7) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Glamorgan as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(8) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination;

(9) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwynedd as to *(a)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police constable to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(b)* how many days are allocated in the training of a police sergeant to dealing with accidents involving radioactive contamination, *(c)* how many people are employed by the police to train policemen in dealing with accidents involving radioactivity, and what are their areas of expertise, *(d)* what training policemen receive in the use of personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters, decontamination meters, breathing equipment, and protective clothing and *(e)* what is the total amount of money allocated to the training of, firstly, a police constable and, secondly, a police sergeant to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Lady Castro Urra

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will grant Lady Castro Urra, formerly employed at Exeter university and now imprisoned without trial in Chile, the right to residence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Any application that Lady Castro Urra may make to return to the United Kingdom will receive sympathetic consideration.

Radioactive Contamination (Emergency Services)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) from which sources the emergency services in Gloucestershire can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(2) from which sources the emergency services in Avon can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(3) from which sources the emergency services in South Glamorgan can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(4) from which sources the emergency services in Somerset can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(5) from which sources the emergency services in Dorset can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(6) from which sources the emergency services in East Sussex can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(7) from which sources the emergency services in Kent can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(8) from which sources the emergency services in Suffolk can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(9) from which sources the emergency services in Cleveland can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(10) from which sources the emergency services in Durham can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(11) from which sources the emergency services in Tyne and Wear can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(12) from which sources the emergency services in Cumbria can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use;

(13) from which sources the emergency services in Gwynedd can call for equipment to deal with accidents involving radioactive contamination; and if he will call for a report from the emergency services in that area detailing the total number of *(a)* dosimeters, *(b)* radiac survey meters, *(c)* sets of protective clothing, *(d)* breathing units and *(e)* decontamination units available for use.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Absent Voting

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the clarity and intelligibility of the forms for absent voting and with the workability of the altered procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are satisfied of the workability of the new procedures for absent voting, which were drawn up after full consultation, and of the clarity and intelligibility of the forms, which reflect the requirements of the representation of the people regulations. We shall review both in the light of experience.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he expects the new procedures for absent voting to produce in the numbers of absent voters being registered and entitled to vote at local and parliamentary elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We expect the new procedures to lead to an increase in the number of people who are entitled to an absent vote at any particular parliamentary or local election, since for the first time holidaymakers and anyone else who is unable to vote in person on the date of the poll will qualify for an absent vote.

Immigration

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for visits for compassionate reasons such as attendance at a funeral have been refused in *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan and *(c)* Bangladesh since the introduction of visa requirements for visitors from the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available centrally.

Metropolitan Police (Overtime)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what current limitations exist on the amount of overtime that may be worked by any member of the Metropolitan police, or restrictions on the mileage over any given period and the use of its road vehicles.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufacturing Industry (International Comparisons)

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the annual percentage increase or decrease since 1970 in net domestic fixed capital formation in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. MacGregor: Figures for the United Kingdom were published in the *Official Report* on 30 March 1987, at column *357*. Figures for the other countries specified are not available on a comparable basis.

Dover, Folkestone and Newhaven

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many customs officers have been available for duty at Dover, Folkestone and Newhaven in each of the last five years; and what has been the volume of vehicular traffic coming into the United Kingdom through each of those ports during the same years.

Mr. Brooke: For operational reasons it is not policy to disclose the numbers of Customs staff employed at specific locations. The staffing at Dover, Folkestone and Newhaven is regularly reviewed and an assessment made of the risks having regard to variations in traffic. The fixed staff are supported by mobile teams and specialist staff who are organised on a regional basis.

The number of vehicles entering the United Kingdom through the ports of Dover, Folkestone and Newhaven for the last three years for which figures are available are as follows:

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Dover	1,193,748	1,228,276	1,308,549
Folkestone	84,326	76,649	51,778
Newhaven	65,452	63,158	82,132

Motoring Expenses

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the treatment of motoring expenses for value added tax introduced by the Finance Act 1986, and in particular the assumption by the Inland Revenue that an agricultural business in a rural area will undertake 500 miles of private motoring per month.

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise will be monitoring the effects of the scheme carefully in the first year or two of operation: in any case, the Government are required to review the level of the scale charges on an annual basis, under the terms of the European Community derogation which had to be obtained before the scheme could be introduced.

Under the scheme, VAT is charged according to a fixed scale where fuel used for private motoring is paid for by a business which recovers the input tax on its purchase. The scheme is intended to produce a broadly reasonable result without the need for detailed mileage records to be kept. It applies to all such motoring, and does not make assumptions about agricultural as compared with other classes of businesses.

Income Tax

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost in 1986-87 prices of all reductions in rates of income tax since May 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the

amount of building society holdings in each of the past five years and to date; how many registered building societies there are in the United Kingdom; and how often he meets representatives of the Building Societies Association.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 April 1987]: The most recent information available is for the end of 1985. At that time there was a total of 171 registered building societies in the United Kingdom. The figures showing the total assets of building societies for the period 1981-85 are as follows:

Total Assets of United Kingdom Building Societies

	£bn
1981	61·9
1982	73·1
1983	85·9
1984	102·8
1985	120·1

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not recently met representatives of the Building Societies Association, but I meet the BSA from time to time.

THE ARTS

West Midlands (Financial Support)

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish information available to him on the level of financial support per capita for the arts by local authorities in the west midlands.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Monday 27 April 1987.

PRIME MINISTER

Kingswood

Q60. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Kingswood.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Pensions

Q116. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister what has been the improvement in real terms in the rates of retirement pensions since 1979, taking into account the new rates which came into effect on 6 April.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy is pledged to protect pensions and linked long-term benefits against inflation. The uprating which came into effect on 6 April is fully in line with this policy, and reflects the rise in prices between January and September 1986. It will not be possible to calculate the precise real term increase in the rate of retirement pensions until the retail prices index for April is announced in mid-May.

British Broadcasting Corporation

Q178. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what criteria she proposes to use in deciding which persons to recommend to Her Majesty for appointment to the board of governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation when three vacancies fall due in the summer.

The Prime Minister: As in all appointments to the broadcasting authorities, I would wish to ensure that the members of the board combined personal distinction with a wide and balanced range of interests and experience in order that it should continue to fulfil its responsibility for safeguarding the public interest in broadcasting matters.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 April.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 April.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENERGY

Energy Action Projects (Scotland)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what share of the £60 million package of local energy action projects is earmarked for Scotland.

Mr. David Hunt: It is currently estimated that Scotland will account for 15 to 20 per cent. of the 500 or so community insulation projects operating in 1988-89, and a similar proportion of Government support for those projects.

Draught Proofing

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates he has made of the impact which the new arrangements for paying the cost of draught proofing have had on take-up.

Mr. David Hunt: The new arrangements for meeting the cost of the draught-proofing service provided by community insulation projects will not be introduced until April 1988.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. 368]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether any current or former staff of his Department has been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. 368]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April at columns 627-28.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *368*]: This Department has circulated copies of the Department of Employment/Health and Safety Executive booklet "AIDS and Employment" to all staff.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

North-South Interdependence and Solidarity Campaign

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial contribution the Government are making to the European public campaign on North-South interdependence and solidarity organised by the Council of Europe; and if he will make it his policy to devote to this campaign at least as great a level of resources as that put into other campaigns organised by the Council of Europe.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are meeting the expenses incurred by the British representative to the European organising committee and bureau. While supporting the aims of the Council of Europe's North-South awareness campaign, we believe that non-governmental organisations are best placed to carry forward the campaign in Britain. Other Council of Europe campaigns have dealt with a wide variety of subjects, and are not directly comparable. Each case is considered on its merits.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radiation

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he now has the results of the accelerated growth experiments carried out on Cumbrian vegetation contaminated by the Chernobyl fallout; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: We have just received some preliminary results from two successive croppings of the vegetation which was removed from the Cumbrian restricted area and grown on under simulated spring conditions.

It had been hoped that radiocaesium levels in spring grass would show substantial falls as caesium became locked into the soil. Unfortunately, these low mineral soils are not binding caesium as efficiently as lowland soils and the first two cuts have shown evidence of some continuing recycling of radiocaesium. While the simulated conditions may not fully parallel conditions on the hillside, the indications are that the reservoir of available radiocaesium in the root matt in some upland species is larger than we had hoped and we must now expect that there will continue to be some radiocaesium in the vegetation eaten by certain upland sheep in the restricted areas in Cumbria and Wales in this spring and early summer. In practical terms, it means that restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep in the worse affected areas will probably have to remain in place for most of the 1987 marketing season.

We shall continue to monitor the situation carefully. In view of our established live monitoring capability there will be no need for blanket bans and we shall do all we can to operate any necessary controls as flexibly as possible. Monitored sheep that pass the test are free to go for slaughter. For the small percentage that fail and have to be marked, we have full compensation arrangements for any price blight at auction. These arrangements were revised recently to encompass individual lot valuation, as well as special provision for ewes with lambs at foot.

Additional research has been put in hand to find the best practicable means of reducing the present problems and minimising the need for restrictions. I will keep the House informed.

For the future, we have an extensive programme of research and monitoring in progress which will enable us to refine our predictions and to identify when and/or where controls might be relaxed. I will keep the House informed of progress on this work.

TRANSPORT

Fishing Vessels (Grimsby)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the number of fishing vessels registered in Grimsby for 1979-80 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The records of the numbers of fishing vessels registered at ports in the United Kingdom are for calendar years. The numbers registered at Grimsby at 31 December in each of the years 1979, 1980 and 1986 (the latest year for which figures are available) is as follows:

	Number
1979	283
1980	271
1986	162

Rail Commuter Services

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the percentage increase in rail season ticket revenues from commuter services for each of the past five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The annual real percentage change in season ticket receipts relating to British Rail's network south-east services for each of the past five years is as follows:

	Percentage
1982	[1] −15·3
1983	[1] +15·9
1984	−0·5
1985	+3·9
1986	+10·6

[1] Distorted by 1982 BR strike which depressed receipts in that year.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to inform himself as to progress in the negotiations between British Rail and Eurotunnel on the financing of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Both British Rail and Eurotunnel are keeping me informed of the progress of these negotiations, which I am satisfied are being handled on a purely commercial basis.

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether Parliament will be informed if advice from the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority, or from its British delegation, is being disregarded.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Channel fixed link treaty gives the Safety Authority the right to make reports directly to the Government. The Government have assured the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill in another place (Minutes of Evidence, Monday 6 April, page 28, second column) that should the Safety Authority bring to the attention of the Secretary of State a fundamental disagreement on an important issue of public safety between itself and the Intergovernmental Commission, or should the United Kingdom delegation to the Safety Authority notify a similar disagreement between themselves and their French counterparts, the Secretary of State will report that fact to Parliament.

Dangerous Chemicals (Shipment)

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals for tightening the regulations regarding the shipment of dangerous chemicals into the ports and their onward transport by road and rail in the United Kingdom; whether he is satisfied that the current European Economic Community code of practice governing such transport is adequate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The carriage of dangerous chemicals at sea is subject to the international maritime dangerous goods code. The code is continually updated to take accounts of new technological advances while safeguarding safety requirements.

Unloaded cargoes are subject to harbour byelaws. From 1 June the Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987 will apply.

Road transport in bulk from the port area is covered by the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981. The Health and Safety Executive is currently considering a number of amendments to these regulations. The Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc.) Regulations 1986, which became operational from 6 April this year, apply to certain substances in packages down to a capacity of 200 litres, and less in some cases. The Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984, as amended in 1986, apply throughout. These three sets of regulations provide comprehensive controls.

The transport of dangerous goods by rail takes place under British Rails' list of dangerous goods and conditions of acceptance scheme, which works very well.

Responsibility for implementing EC directive No. 84/631 — EEC on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste rests with the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Drink-driving

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans for a drink-driving campaign during the summer months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Plans for the Government's campaign against drinking and driving will concentrate advertising resources during the summer, autumn and pre-Christmas periods. This is only part of a 365 days a year effort against this unacceptable behaviour.

The advertising will support other publicity initiatives using a variety of promotional methods and media in close collaboration with police, local authorities and others.

The continuing campaign will rely greatly on the public, the press, television and radio to bring pressure to bear on irresponsible elements who endanger their own lives and the lives of others by mixing drinking and driving.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what statistics he has on an annual basis, covering the number of drivers and passengers killed in motor vehicle accidents where consumption of alcohol by one or more of the drivers is shown to be a significant factor.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of drivers/riders and passengers who were killed in road accidents in which any driver or rider either *(a)* subsequently failed a breath test or *(b)* was shown, on autopsy, to have a blood alcohol level in excess of the legal limit is as follows:

Great Britain: 1984: Death in drink-drive accidents

	Number
Driver/riders	414
Passengers	235

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what data he has concerning the periods of the day in England and Wales when road accidents in which alcohol is a contributory factor do and are more likely to occur.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table gives some indication of involvement of drivers or riders over the legal limit.

Drivers/riders failing breath test: by hour of day: England and Wales 1985

Hour beginning	*Number of driver/riders involved in accidents*	*Number of driver/riders failing breath test*	*Proportion*
			Per cent.
—	6,748	1,198	17·18
1	4,236	905	21·4
2	3,279	676	20·6
3	1,455	297	20·4
4	1,066	131	12·3
5	1,586	68	4·3
6	3,716	49	1·3
7	13,677	48	0·4
8	23,766	38	0·2
9	15,107	34	0·2
10	15,107	42	0·3
11	18,991	53	0·3
12	21,873	72	0·3
13	21,283	116	0·5
14	21,113	353	1·7
15	25,845	584	2·3
16	29,720	520	1·7
17	31,200	469	1·5
18	21,122	381	1·8
19	18,890	406	2·1
20	15,338	496	3·2
21	13,058	614	4·7
22	13,392	1,173	8·8
23	16,935	2,626	15·5
Total	358,748	11,349	3·2

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what statistics he has, on an annual basis, concerning the

number of pedestrians killed or injured by motor vehicles where consumption of alcohol by a driver is shown to be a significant factor.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of pedestrians who were killed or injured by drivers or riders who subsequently failed a breath test is as follows:

Great Britain—1985

	Number
Killed	107
Seriously injured	431
Slightly injured	583
Total	1,121

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many road users, including pedestrians, pedal cyclists and children, were killed or injured on the roads by a driver with a raised blood alcohol level; and if he will provide distributions of casualties and rates by hour of day, for 1975 and 1985 separately, for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Travel to Work

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the national average weekly travel-to-work cost.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The average weekly travel-to-work cost in Great Britain as at January 1987 is estimated as £5·50.

Roads

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Transport what his policies are for investment in roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have placed in the Library of the House copies of "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" presented to the House today. This White Paper is in two volumes. Volume 1 describes the Government's current policies for the development of both the trunk and the local road system in England. Volume 2 outlines the national trunk road construction programme and reports progress since the last comprehensive review. It also sets out the results of my 1987 review and gives details of the 82 new road schemes that I have added to the forward programme.

Transport Services (Attacks)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many attacks there have been in the last five years on *(a)* passengers and *(b)* employees on (i) London Regional Transport services or property and (ii) British Rail Southern Region services or property.

Mr. David Mitchell [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *572*]: The British Transport police has provided the following figures relating to criminal assaults:

Year	*London Underground*		*BR Southern Region*	
	(a) passengers	*(b) employees*	*(a) passengers*	*(b) employees*
1982	758	73	303	47
1983	662	104	292	87
1984	1,008	84	323	84
1985	1,205	80	379	80
1986	1,370	105	448	60

Notes:
(1) Criminal assaults comprise murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, grievous bodily harm, malicious wounding, actual bodily harm, robbery and assault with intent to rob.
(2) Figures are based on the date of input to the BTP computer, which can be some time after the date on which offences were committed, and do not precisely reflect annual trends in actual offences.
(3) Figures for London buses are not separately identifiable.
(4) Figures for passengers on BR Southern Region include a small number of serious assaults on police, which are not separately identifiable.

SCOTLAND

Education Expenditure

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* the average net cost per pupil, cash, per secondary pupil at maintained secondary schools in each local education authority in Scotland and *(b)* the average expenditure in the same years per assisted place pupil for each local education authority in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest available information, for 1985-86, is set out in the table.

Authority	*Cost per pupil in Local Authority secondary schools* £	*Average expenditure per assisted place pupil*[1] £
Borders	1,408	—
Central	1,482	1,411
Dumfries and Galloway	1,445	1,738
Fife	1,494	1,842
Grampian	1,522	1,628
Highland	1,457	2,427
Lothian	1,615	1,662
Strathclyde	[2]1,597	1,487
Tayside	1,556	1,654
Orkney	1,760	—
Shetland	2,270	—
Western Isles	[2]1,879	—

[1] The figures relate to the 1985-86 academic year and represent the average cost to central Government of an assisted pupil in participating schools located in each education authority area.
[2] Provisional figures.

Assisted Places

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of school pupils from each local education authority area who benefit from the provisions of the assisted places scheme during the current academic year.

Mr. John MacKay: Pupils at participating schools may come from outwith the area of the education authority in which the schools are located but the number of places currently taken up at schools situated in each local authority area is set out in the table.

Area	*Number of assisted pupils*
Borders	—
Central	55
Dumfries and Galloway	16
Fife	22
Grampian	99
Highland	43
Lothian	1,045
Orkney	—
Shetland	—
Strathclyde	841
Tayside	459
Western Isles	—
Scotland	2,580

Forth Valley Health Board

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now satisfied with the consultation procedure carried out by Forth Valley health board in respect of its proposals in relation to 11 Randolph road.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has been given a full account by the chairman of Forth Valley health board of the arrangements made for consulting local residents about the board's proposals for 11 Randolph road, Stirling. These consultations included the following steps:

a. The board sent a copy of the draft application for planning permission to neighbours inviting comment before its submission to the planning authority;

b. the same neighbours were invited to meet senior officers of the board to discuss these detailed proposals and interviews were arranged for all who responded;

c. neighbours were advised of the date when the planning application was being submitted to the planning authority;

d. the board has responded fully to every letter received from anyone claiming an interest in the proposal;

e. all residents of Randolph road have been invited to visit the Royal Scottish national hospital to see the arrangements made to train patients for discharge to the community and meet those chosen for discharge to the Randolph road house.

In recent weeks the chairman and general manager of the health board have met members of the Randolph road community group, and the board remains willing to discuss with local residents any details of the proposal which may still require clarification.

Geese

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many barnacle, pinkfoot, greylag and whitefront geese, respectively, have wintered on *(a)* the Solway and *(b)* the Island of Islay in each of the last five years.

Mr. Rifkind: My officials do not make counts of geese wintering in Scotland. The figures contained in the following table refer to seasonal migratory peaks and have been supplied by the Nature Conservancy Council from data collected on its behalf by the Wildfowl Trust.

Year and Area	*Species*			
	Barnacle	*Pinkfoot*	*Greylag*	*Whitefront*
1981-82				
Solway Basin	8,300	10,200	1,300	[1]—
Islay	17,000	[1]—	[1]—	3,300
1982-83				
Solway Basin	8,500	11,300	3,100	[1]—
Islay	14,000	[1]—	[1]—	3,900
1983-84				
Solway Basin	8,400	16,300	2,800	[1]—
Islay	22,900	[1]—	[1]—	4,600
1984-85				
Solway Basin	10,500	27,000	3,700	[1]—
Islay	23,100	[1]—	[1]—	5,300
1985-86				
Solway Basin	10,400	6,900	3,800	[1]—
Islay	19,200	[1]—	[1]—	6,300

[1] Negligible flock population.
Final figures for 1986-87 are not yet available.

Balmore Industrial Estate, Glasgow

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what follow-up discussions the SDA will be having with the estates department of Glasgow district council over the possibility of conversion to, and construction of, small industrial units at the Balmore industrial estate, Glasgow.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 April 1987, c. *292*]: I understand that there were discussions between the Scottish Development Agency and the estates department of Glasgow district council on 9 and 22 April. The agency has now offered to construct some 10,000 sq ft of small industrial units on the Balmore industrial estate and lease these back to the district council. Final details are still to be agreed.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the Scottish Development Agency's annual budget for all promotional purposes for each of the last five years; and what percentage of its total budget these figures represent.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *467*]: The information is set out in the table:

	(£000)	*Per cent.*
1982-83	4,827	4·2
1983-84	5,611	5·0
1984-85	7,755	6·9
1985-86	7,250	5·8
1986-87	5,453	4·2

Note: Figures include costs of marketing, production of printed material and videos, exhibitions, seminars, trade promotions and advertising, together with the overseas operational costs of Locate in Scotland.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons and firms are registered with the enterprise allowance scheme; how often payments are issued; and on how many occasions payments were delayed during the two months ended 31 March due to a breakdown in the supporting computer system.

Mr. Viggers: A total of 2,143 persons representing 2,054 small businesses are currently receiving assistance under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Payments to participants on the scheme are issued fortnightly in remittances of £80 on each second Tuesday of the 52-week period of payment.

During the two months ended 31 March 1987 there were two occurrences of a one-day delay in the issue of payments caused by temporary computer problems.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Balance of Trade

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the non-oil manufacturing trade balance with (i) the member states of the European Economic Community and (ii) the rest of the world each year since 1960.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

United Kingdom balance of trade in manufactures

£ million

Balance of payments basis

	European Community[1]	*Rest of world*
1960	138	1,464
1961	270	1,477
1962	359	1,423
1963	398	1,472
1964	339	1,268
1965	386	1,456
1966	392	1,528
1967	266	1,276
1968	306	1,335
1969[2]	545	1,573
1970[2]	643	1,918
1971	426	2,589
1972	55	2,090
1973	−368	1,856
1974	−507	2,477
1975	−588	4,326
1976	−476	5,393
1977	−488	6,374
1978	−1,727	6,793
1979	−2,580	5,277
1980	−1,168	6,626
1981	−2,613	7,197
1982	−4,335	6,706
1983	−7,174	4,911
1984	−8,082	4,203
1985	−8,683	5,680
1986	−10,058	4,662

[1] Present membership throughout.

[2] 1960 to 1969 Overseas Trade Statistics basis—imports valued inclusive of insurance and freight—the corresponding figures for 1970 are £560 million and £1,674 million respectively.

Sources:

Department of Trade and Industry. United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Note:

Manufactures taken as standard international trade classification (revision 2), sections 5 to 8; this excludes oil which is in division 33.

Competition

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the index of competitiveness each year since 1960, taking 1979 as representing 100.

Mr. Alan Clark The most commonly quoted measure is relative unit labour costs which is used in the following table. Data for 1960 are not available:

United Kingdom Relative Unit Labour Costs

	1979 = 100
1961	102·5
1962	100·9
1963	97·9
1964	96·7
1965	100·5
1966	103·0
1967	98·0
1968	83·3
1969	87·0
1970	89·8
1971	92·4
1972	90·2
1973	80·2
1974	80·2
1975	86·7
1976	78·8
1977	77·8
1978	84·1
1979	100·0
1980	123·9
1981	125·5
1982	117·6
1983	107·3
1984	104·5
1985	107·9
1986 Q1-Q3	105·5

Note—Defined as United Kingdom unit labour costs per unit of output divided by a weighted average of competitors' unit labour costs, both series being expressed in a common currency. The series relates to manufacturing.

Source: IMF.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further representations he has received regarding the proposed privatisation of Rolls-Royce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations about the company's privatisation. We welcome the return of Rolls-Royce to the private sector, further details of which were announced earlier today, including the offer for sale price.

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the privatisation of Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Channon: This morning the offer for sale of ordinary shares in Rolls-Royce was made at a price of £1·70p per share. This represents a market capitalisation

of £1,362·5 million. The total number of shares being made available under the offer is 801,470,588, of which 789,705,883 have been fully underwritten and subunderwritten, the balance representing shares made available under arrangements by which employees can obtain shares free of charge.

Approximately 328 million shares are initially being offered to the general public including Rolls-Royce employees and pensioners. If the offer is at least twice subscribed, this number will be increased to 407 million shares, some 50 per cent. of the total. The remainder of the shares will be placed with financial institutions in the United Kingdom. There is no overseas offering.

Prospectuses and application forms will be published in certain newspapers from Thursday 30 April. In addition, all those who have registered with the Rolls-Royce share information office will be sent a prospectus, including a public application form. Copies will also be available from 30 April from certain banks and stockbrokers. Applications must be received by 10 am on Thursday 7 May.

Copies of the prospectuses are being placed in the Library of the House today.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total value of regional development grants and regional selective assistance grants awarded to businesses in Lancashire in 1987-88 and 1985-86 by district council area, indicating the number in each case.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information provided in the table indicates offers of regional selective assistance made to companies in Lancashire in 1975-76 and 1985-86. It is not possible to provide details of assistance offered under old style regional development grant except at disproportionate cost. New regional development grant of £1,359,000 was offered to 52 companies in the West Lancashire district in 1985-86, which is the district in Lancashire with development area status and therefore eligible for regional development grant.

Area	*Grant Offered 1975-76* Regional Selective Assistance		*Grant Offered 1985-86*	
District Councils	*Number of offers*	*Amount £000's*	*Number of offers*	*Amount £000's*
Blackburn[1]	12	346	10	655
Blackpool	1	4	—	—
Burnley	6	396	—	—
Chorley[1]	3	49	2	105
Fylde	1	17	—	—
Hyndburn[1]	3	33	5	618
Lancaster City	3	88	—	—
Pendle	5	604	—	—
Preston	—	—	—	—
Ribble Valley[1]	—	—	1	4
Rossendale[1]	5	49	6	272
South Ribble	1	45	—	—
West Lancashire[1]	8	1,513	6	870
Wyre	2	10	—	—

[1] District councils with assisted area status

West Lancashire

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications were made for regional selective assistance and regional development grant in the West Lancashire district in 1986-87.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There were four applications for regional selective assistance and 151 applications for RDG(2) in the West Lancashire district in 1986-87.

Note:
It is not possible to provide information in respect of the "old" RDG1 scheme as information is not maintained by individual areas.

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total value of regional development grants and regional selective assistance made in the year 1986-87 to applicants in the West Lancashire district.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The value of offers made in 1986-87 in the West Lancashire district for regional selective assistance and regional development grant (2) was £487,000 and £3,041,195, respectively.

Note:
It is not possible to provide information in respect of the "old" RDG1 scheme as information is not maintained by individual areas.

Trade Deficit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest annual figures for each of 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1986 for the *(a)* deficit in manufactured trade between Britain and Japan, *(b)* deficit in manufactured trade between Britain and the EEC, *(c)* deficit in manufactured trade between members of the European Economic Community and Japan and *(d)* deficit in manufactured trade between West Germany and Britain.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table.

Balance of Trade in Manufactures[1] (ECU billions[2])

	United Kingdom trade with:			*EC (12) trade with:*
	Japan	*EC (12)*	*F. R. Germany*	*Japan*
1970	—	1·5	−0·2	−0·6
1975	−0·7	0·2	−1·3	−3·4
1980	−2·1	−1·9	−3·4	−9·8
1985	−5·7	−17·1	−10·3	−19·8
1986	−6·1	−16·7	−10·3	−23·6

[1] Standard International Trade Classification Divisions 5 to 8.
[2] 1 ECU = approximately £0·42 (1970); £0·56 (1975); £0·60 (1980); £0·59 (1985); and £0·67 (1986).
Source: Eurostat.

Japanese Disinvestment

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the cause of net Japanese disinvestment in the United Kingdom in 1982 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The figures showing net disinvestment in the United Kingdom by Japan in 1982 and 1984 relate to net inward direct investment. This covers transactions between Japanese companies and their United Kingdom subsidiaries, associates and branches in all sectors of the

economy, including the financial sector. An analysis of inward direct investment into its components is given in the table. This shows net increases from net acquisitions of share and loan capital and from reinvested profits, offset by net reductions in indebtedness to overseas parent companies and head offices overseas.

The annual report for 1986 by the Invest in Britain Bureau, published recently, records more recent planned investment projects by Japan in this country. This shows that the United Kingdom's position as Europe's leading recipient of Japanese investment projects is being maintained.

Inward direct investment from Japan (£ million)

	1982	*1984*
Net acquisitions of share and loan capital	6·1	20·6
Increase in indebtedness due to overseas parent companies and to head offices overseas	−72·8	−107·6
Unremitted profits	4·0	52·8
Total	−62·7	−34·2

Source: Business Monitor MA4

Note. — Including oil companies within the direct investment figures from 1984 onwards did not affect the series for Japanese direct investment in the United Kingdom.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle entered the YTS in 1985; what was the placement percentage; and how many completed the scheme.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the available information.

	Burnley local authority district 1985-86	*Pendle local authority district 1985-86*
Starts[2]	692	498
Placement percentage[3]:		
in full-time employment (per cent.)	63	61
in part-time employment (per cent.)	3	3
on a full-time course (per cent.)	3	4
Completers	458	313

[1] The starts figures quoted are for April 1985 to March 1986 as statistics are not available for 1985.

[2] The figure for YTS starts includes some individuals who entered more than one YTS programme during the course of the year and therefore slightly overstates the number of individuals participating in the scheme as a whole.

[3] These figures are from the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) follow-up survey of YTS leavers between April 1985 and March 1986.

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what proportion of 16-year-olds, 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds, respectively, entered employment in each of the three years preceding the introduction of YTS; and what have been the proportions in each year since YTS was introduced.

Mr. Lee: Information in the precise form requested is not available.

The available relevant estimates are shown in the following table:

Percentages, January each year, Great Britain

	1981	*1982*	*1983*[1]	*1984*[1]	*1985*	*1986*
16-year-olds[2]						
Total population of which:	100	100	100	100	100	100
(a) in full-time education or YTS-YOP or unemployed[3]	65	74	80	82	84	84
(b) other: mainly employed outside YTS[4]	35	26	20	18	16	16
17-year-olds[2]						
Total population of which:	100	100	100	100	100	100
(a) in full-time education or YTS-YOP or unemployed[3]	45	51	56	54	52	52
(b) other: mainly employed outside YTS[4]	55	49	44	46	48	48
18-year-olds[2]						
Total population of which:	100	100	100	100	100	100
(a) in full-time education or YTS-YOP or unemployed[3]	30	35	39	38	37	36
(b) other: mainly employed outside YTS[4]	70	65	61	62	63	64

[1] YTS was introduced in April 1983.

[2] Ages as at preceding 31 August.

[3] Registered unemployed for 1981 and 1982, claimant unemployed for 1983 and thereafter.

[4] Mainly those in employment (outside YTS) but including those who were neither employed nor seeking work (eg, because of domestic responsibilities). Also including the unregistered unemployed before 1983 and from 1983 those seeking work but not claiming benefit. This group is obtained by subtracting from the total population of the age group those estimated to be in full-time education or YTS-YOP and the unemployed.

Sex Discrimination

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many actions have been brought against employers, on a regional basis, under the Sex Discrimination Act on a yearly basis since 1983.

Mr. Lee: The information is given in the following table, which refers to applications registered at the regional offices of industrial tribunals. A small proportion of these applications will relate to the treatment of partners not employees, but it is not possible to identify these separately.

England and Wales	1983	1984	1985	1986	[2]1987
Ashford[1]	11	16	—	—	—
Birmingham	29	34	40	58	4
Bristol	11	12	22	25	5
Bury St. Edmunds	12	13	22	19	2
Cardiff	13	13	28	31	7
Exeter[1]	4	—	—	—	—
Leeds	11	22	20	31	4
Liverpool	55	26	29	49	7
London (Central)	32	32	40	54	4
London (North)	24	27	27	45	6
London (South)	28	30	31	67	13
Manchester	32	52	38	38	9
Newcastle	16	15	21	29	4
Nottingham	16	15	18	25	6
Sheffield	12	14	24	40	2
Southampton	14	13	18	34	6
Total England and Wales	320	334	378	545	79
Scotland all Regions	30	42	71	63	10
Total Great Britain	350	376	449	608	89

[1] The ROIT at Ashford closed in 1984 and that at Exeter in 1983.
[2] To end February only.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster-General what has been the increase in the ratio of median gross earnings of a full-time adult male manual worker compared with his counter-part on non-manual work between 1979 and 1986; and what estimate he has made of the effect this has had on employment in manual occupations.

Mr. Lee: Between April 1979 and April 1986 the ratio of the median gross weekly earnings of full-time adult male manual employees to those of full-time adult male non-manual employees is estimated to have decreased by 12·5 per cent. for Great Britain.

Summary evidence on the general link between pay and jobs is contained in "The relationship between employment and wages", a review by Treasury officials, January 1985, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General if he will state each annual rate of unemployment in Grimsby from 1979 to the latest available year.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows annual average unemployment expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed in the Grimsby travel-to-work area for each year from 1979 to 1986. The figures are not comparable over the whole period because of the change in travel-to-work boundaries, and changes in the compilation of the monthly unemployment count.

Grimsby travel-to-work area

	Per cent.
As defined in 1978 as Unemployed registrants	
1979	6·1
1980	8·4
1981[1]	12·6
1982[2]	13·9
Unemployed claimants	
1983	14·7
As defined in 1984 Unemployed claimants	
1984	15·4
1985	16·1
1986	15·2

[1] 1981 is the average of 10 months.
[2] 1982 is the average of 10 months only: January to October.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General what has been the annual number of notified redundancies in Grimsby from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: Information relating to confirmed redundancies is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in Grimsby

Year	Number
1979	0
1980	1,005
1981	1,886
1982	880
1983	1,436
1984	1,081
1985	332
1986	517

Note: The figures measure redundancies confirmed as due to occur, in groups of 10 or more employees, and are based on follow-up action of employers' notifications of redundancies under the Employment Protection Act 1975. Figures for 1986 are provisional.

Mr. Hawksley asked the Paymaster General how many people were in work in the Telford area in February 1987 and in February 1983; and what percentage of the population this was in each case.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information for new towns such as Telford comes from the 1981 census of population and is contained in the "New Towns Report, England and Wales, part 1", ref: CEN 81 NT(1), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Hannam asked the Paymaster General if he will list the unemployment figures for Easter for the month of March in each of the years 1975 to 1987.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table gives estimates of seasonally adjusted unemployment (excluding school leavers), consistent with the current count, for March of each year from 1975 to 1987 in the United Kingdom.

Unemployment (excluding school leavers) in the United Kingdom, adjusted for discontinuities and seasonality

March	thousands
1975	701·8
1976	1,149·6
1977	1,207·6
1978	1,247·5
1979	1,183·8
1980	1,210·2
1981	2,107·0
1982	2,532·3
1983	2,823·7
1984	2,966·4
1985	3,094·8
1986	3,198·6
[1]1987	3,042·9

[1] The March 1987 figure is provisional and subject to revision.

Enterprise Allowance and Loan Guarantee Schemes

Mr. Batiste asked the Paymaster General how many people in *(a)* the Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(b)* the Leeds travel-to-work area are currently (i) on the enterprise allowance scheme and (ii) in receipt of a loan under the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Trippier: On 22 April 1987 8,148 people were on the enterprise allowance scheme in Yorkshire and Humberside. This figure includes 1,189 people receiving the allowance in the Leeds area. Currently 1,374 loans under the loan guarantee scheme totalling about £40 million have been guaranteed in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. This includes the Leeds area for which separate figures are not kept. No records are maintained of those people who are receiving both enterprise allowance and a loan under the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Mike Bendall

Mr. Steen asked the Paymaster General if, in the light of the undertaking given by the Bridge Agency to Mr. Mike Bendall of East Hartley, Blackawton, Totnes, Devon, that his employment as a community programme worker in the Action Van project, Totnes, was secure until August 1987, and of the statement by officials in his Department that every field placement initiated by the Bridge Agency would be honoured by the Community Rural Agency which has replaced it, he will instruct the Manpower Services Commission to reconsider its termination of Mr. Bendall's employment on 1 May 1987.

Mr. Lee: Community programme participants are normally employed for up to one year, although in special circumstances this may be extended. Mr. Bendall has already benefited from over two years employment on the Action Van project. He was informed in January 1987 by the Bridge Agency that his particular post would not be continued when the project was renewed from May 1987. This remains the position.

ACAS (Annual Report)

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Paymaster General when the Secretary of State for Employment expects to receive the annual report of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State and I have received the ACAS report for 1986, which will be laid before both Houses of Parliament tomorrow. The report is also published tomorrow and copies will then be available from the Vote Office.

DEFENCE

Her Majesty's Forces (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases recorded in Her Majesty's Forces in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: Statistics are not held centrally on the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases within the armed forces. Within the United Kingdom, service men may well seek treatment at NHS specialist treatment clinics, so the service medical authorities would not therefore be aware of all cases.

Underground Nuclear Tests

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if United Kingdom underground nuclear tests are for purposes other than the Trident ballistic missile programme;

(2) if United Kingdom underground nuclear testing will be required once the Trident ballistic missiles are in service;

(3) if continued United Kingdom underground nuclear testing is necessary for *(a)* safety and *(b)* operational reasons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to identify the specific purpose of any joint United Kingdom-United States underground test or the weapons programme it supports.

Equestrian Events

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 22 April, if he will list those equestrian sports in which a service man can participate either individually or as a member of a team in a representative capacity and thereby be entitled to use military transport at public expense for the conveyance of privately owned horses.

Mr. Freeman: There is no specific list of approved equestrian sports in which a service man can participate and thereby be entitled to use military transport at public expense for the conveyance of privately owned horses. Examples of such sports which may qualify for approval are polo, show jumping, eventing, racing, point-to-point, hunter trials and tent-pegging. It is, of course, a prerequisite that participants must be representing either their unit, their service or the combined services.

Royal Navy Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the list of names of countries to which invitations to the next Royal Navy equipment exhibition have been extended.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In common with all my predecessors, I do not intend to publish a list of countries invited to the Royal Navy equipment exhibition.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the next Royal Navy equipment exhibition will be held; and on which dates it will be open to *(a)* overseas customers, *(b)* the press and *(c)* the British public.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The next Royal Navy equipment exhibition is from 7 to 11 September 1987 and will be open each day to overseas customers and the defence-related technical press. On 6 September there is a press day which the national, local provincial and technical press may attend. The exhibition is not open to the public.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987; c. *382*]: No. No Occupational risks are involved, and there is no medical reason for introducing screening among civil servants in this Department.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987; c. *382*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987; c. *382*]: In April 1986 the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the Chief Medical Officer DHSS, circulated all Departments with guidance to managers and model notes for staff. In providing guidance to managers for discussions with staff, the Department has drawn on these documents and on the Department of Employment/Health and Safety Executive booklet "Aids and Employment", which I understand are available in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from regional water authorities regarding the financial implications of upgrading bathing beaches.

Mr. Waldegrave: Water authorities have recently submitted their 1987 corporate plans. Most authorities are expecting improvements in bathing waters to require increases in capital investment and operating costs associated with the disposal of effluent to the sea.

Council House Sales

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for purchases of their homes by secure tenants since the Housing Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Up to December 1986, 594,700 council tenants have bought their homes from English local authorities and new towns by exercising their right to buy.

Elmley Marshes, Kent

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify the management objectives agreed between the Nature Conservancy Council and Mr. Merricks for the Elmley marsh, Kent, site of special scientific interest, the timetable for implementing these objectives and the individuals represented on the proposed management committee and the trustees of the new reserve trust.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that the management objectives for the new reserve at Elmley marshes are intended to provide for the maintenance and enhancement of the full range of nature conservation interests in the reserve, particularly in connection with the breeding bird population, the over-wintering wildfowl and waders, and the invertebrate population. These will be implemented by a management plan, which will include a timetable, to be drawn up in co-operation with the Nature Conservancy Council.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Nature Conservancy Council has given by way of grant or compensation to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for managing part of the Elmley marsh, Kent, site of special scientific interest adjacent to that controlled by Mr. Merricks.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am advised that the Nature Conservancy Council has agreed three applications for grant aid totalling £3,510 for the RSPB in connection with management works for its reserve at Elmley marshes.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what access the public will be granted and visitor facilities provided to the Elmley Marsh, Kent, site of special scientific interest, as a result of the payment of £1·6 million by the Nature Conservancy Council to Mr. Merricks.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that the Elmley conservation trust will encourage the public to visit the site, although care will be needed to ensure that there is no conflict with the maintenance and enhancement of the scientific interest of the site. I understand it is intended to provide a visitor centre, a nature trail and observation hides, and that close attention will be given to the development of educational facilities on the site.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the agreement signed with Mr. Merricks over the management of the Elmley Marsh, Kent, site of special scientific interest will be subject to review at periodic intervals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The management agreement provides for payments to be reviewed at three yearly intervals in accordance with the financial guidelines issued in accordance with section 50(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Local Authorities (Countryside Expenditure)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the sums of money paid to landowners under the following agreements or orders are listed in the accounts of the local authorities making the payments, in a way that can be ascertained by an interested person exercising a right of inspection of an authority's accounts and associated documents under section 159(1) of the Local Government Act 1972: *(a)* a public path creation agreement under section 25 of the Highways Act 1980, *(b)* a public path creation order under section 26 of

the Highways Act 1980, *(c)* an access agreement under section 64 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, *(d)* an access order under section 65 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and *(e)* a management agreement under section 39 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no special statutory requirements governing the accounting for these payments. The form of account is therefore for the local authority to decide. A right of inspection may be exercised under section 17(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. Under section 17(2) of the Act, local government electors or their representatives also have a right to raise questions to the auditor on matters arising out of the accounts.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the management agreements that the Nature Conservancy Council has entered into with owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987, the name of the site of special scientific interest and the amount paid.

Mr. Waldegrave: Individual agreements are treated as confidential matters between owners and occupiers of sites and the Nature Conservancy Council and it is not our policy to disclose details.

During the period 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987, the Nature Conservancy Council completed 318 agreements covering 9,850 hectares. The total cost paid in the financial year 1986-87 was £5,093,674, which includes lump sum payments and arrears from previous years.

Private Rented Accommodation

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he proposes to take to increase the amount of private rented accommodation available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: In recent months, we have taken a number of measures to increase the amount of private rented accommodation available. The requirement that increases in registered rents should be phased over two years has been abolished, as has the requirement to register a fair rent on a shorthold letting in Greater London. The assured tenancy scheme, which permits letting at market rents, has been extended to cover improved, as well as new, dwellings. The Housing Corporation is giving grants to housing associations for rental schemes combining private and public finance, with particular emphasis on accommodation for homeless people and job movers. In the Local Government Bill, we are seeking new powers for local authorities to give financial assistance towards the provision of privately rented accommodation.

We have made it clear that a priority task after the election will be further measures to stimulate the private rented sector by ensuring that landlords can receive a reasonable return on their investment while adequately protecting the security of tenants.

Council Housing Transfer Lists

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what weight he attaches to the length of council housing transfer lists when allocating resources for housing to the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Mr. Tracey: Resources are allocated to local authorities following consideration of all relevant factors including the information in authorities' HIP submissions. Generally, we would not attach much weight to waiting or transfer lists, as local authority practice in compiling such lists varies widely.

System-built Tower Blocks

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he can provide additional resources to enable the London borough of Waltham Forest to deal with the problems of repairing system-built tower blocks.

Mr. Tracey: The main HIP allocations to authorities for 1987-88 have already been made, as announced on 19 December 1986. The resources remaining after making these initial allocations will be distributed to authorities for projects prepared in conjunction with the Estate Action team, and to authorities which have particularly heavy obligations under the housing defects legislation, with a reserve of £2 million for the homes insulation scheme. Allocations in successive years have, however, taken account of the need to repair system-built tower blocks. Bids for allocations in 1988-89 will be invited soon.

Liverpool Arena

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be in a position to announce whether the Government will give financial assistance for the development costs of the Liverpool arena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 2 April at column 605.

Snooker Players (Drug Tests)

Mr. Colin Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Sports Council about the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association's unwillingness to take action over positive drug tests on snooker players who were tested under the Government-funded Sports Council drug abuse advisory group scheme; and what response he has made.

Mr. Tracey: I have received no representations from the Sports Council on this matter. With the council, however, I share a concern over the use of certain medicines by some players, with or without medical prescription. I have therefore asked that the drug abuse advisory group of the Sports Council should discuss this issue urgently with the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association and other interested organisations and to produce a report.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research studies are being carried out into the disposal of radioactive waste on small islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not aware of any research specifically directed at the disposal of radioactive waste on small islands.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his answer*, 30 March 1987, c. *420*]: In April 1986, the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the Chief Medical Officer, DHSS, circulated all departments with guidance to managers and model notes for staff. My Department drew on those notes and on the Department of Employment-Health and Safety Executive book "AIDS and Employment" in providing notes for staff. I understand that copies of both those pieces of guidance are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his answer*, 30 March 1987, c. *420*]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his answer*, 30 March 1987, c. *420*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April at column *628*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Conductive Education

3. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has recently received about funding in the United Kingdom for the study of the Hungarian system of conductive education.

Mr. Dunn: No such representations have been received since I replied to the hon. Member's question about this study on 12 March.

West Yorkshire

10. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on the state of school buildings in West Yorkshire; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received representations from Bradford local education authority, and from individual hon. Members, about the state of that authority's school buildings. He has also received representations, again including some from hon. Members, about building work at individual voluntary aided schools throughout the region.

University Research

11. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about his Department's level of support for university research for the current financial year.

Mr. Walden: Those engaged in university research regularly make the case for more Government money. Planned expenditure for 1987-88 is already expected to exceed £1·3 billion.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

12. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the progress of the GCSE examination plans.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

28. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information and reports he expects to be available to his Department before the start of the 1987-88 academic year on the standards of teaching achieved in GCSE courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 9 March at columns 23-24.

Nursery Education

13. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local authorities which have, in the last three years, increased their provision of places in nursery schools and nursery classes.

18. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local authorities which have, in the last three years, increased their provision of places in nursery schools and nursery classes.

19. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local authorities which have, in the last three years, increased their provision of places in nursery schools and nursery classes.

21. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local authorities which have, in the last three years, increased their provision of places in nursery schools and nursery classes.

Mr. Dunn: The Department collects information only on the number of pupils in nursery schools and classes. Nursery pupil numbers have increased between 1983 and 1986 in the following local education authorities in England:

Local education authorities where the number of children under five attending nursery schools and nursery classes increased between January 1983 and January 1986

Barking	ILEA
Barnet	Birmingham
Bexley	Coventry
Brent	Dudley
Croydon	Sandwell
Ealing	Solihull
Enfield	Wolverhampton
Hillingdon	Knowsley
Hounslow	Liverpool
Kingston-upon-Thames	St. Helens
Newham	Sefton
Sutton	Wirral

Bolton	Cornwall
Bury	Cumbria
Manchester	Derbyshire
Oldham	Devon
Salford	Dorset
Stockport	Durham
Tameside	East Sussex
Trafford	Essex
Wigan	Hampshire
Barnsley	Hereford and Worcester
Doncaster	Hertfordshire
Rotherham	Humberside
Sheffield	Kent
Bradford	Lancashire
Calderdale	Leicestershire
Kirklees	Lincolnshire
Leeds	Norfolk
Wakefield	North Yorkshire
Newcastle upon Tyne	Northamptonshire
North Tyneside	Northumberland
Sunderland	Nottinghamshire
Avon	Oxfordshire
Bedfordshire	Salop
Berkshire	Suffolk
Buckinghamshire	Surrey
Cambridgeshire	Warwickshire
Cheshire	West Sussex
Cleveland	Wiltshire

Student Grants

14. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the level of student grants for the forthcoming academic year.

Mr. Walden: About 50 representations have been received about the level of student grants for the 1987-88 academic year since the main rates of grant were announced on 30 January.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

15. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the current teachers dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department has received many letters, and views have been expressed to me personally by various organisations including four of the six teacher unions.

38. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest position regarding the dispute over teachers' pay and conditions.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I laid before the House on 9 April an order giving teachers an average pay rise of 8·2 per cent. backdated to 1 January and setting out duties and other conditions of employment. The NUT and NAS/UWT at their Easter conference have threatened further disruption in schools. The union activists have shown total disregard for the interests of children. Parents and the public will not support their selfish posturing at their pupils' expense.

City Technology Colleges

16. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest level of funding from private industry for city technology colleges.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In addition to the £1 million sponsorship already announced by Hanson Trust and the Dixons Group, several other companies have expressed a willingness to provide funding and other assistance. I cannot give details until they are ready to make their decisions public.

School Working Day

17. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations concerning changes in the school working day.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received three letters from hon. Members concerning consultations on this subject being conducted in one particular LEA.

Science Base

20. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils its strategy paper on the implications of a major contraction in the science base; and what steps he proposes to take to expand the research capability of the industrial economy.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Advisory Board for the Research Councils is preparing a strategy document which they expect to submit to my right hon. Friend before the summer. It is the Government's policy to promote closer and better working between the science base and industry and commerce. The recently announced LINK initiative is designed to strengthen collaboration between these sectors.

Derbyshire

22. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce his decision on the proposals of Derbyshire county council to reorganise sixth form education in Derbyshire.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision on the proposals to reorganise sixth form education in Derbyshire by the end of the summer.

School Buildings

23. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent consultations have taken place with local education authorities concerning the state of repair of both primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The state of repair of school buildings is discussed in the course of the many contacts which Ministers and officials of the Department have with individual local education authorities and with the local authority associations.

Nursery Nurses

24. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on advanced training of nursery nurses.

26. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on advanced training of nursery nurses.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend hopes that examining and validating bodies for nursery nurse training will have

as their main concern the educational and career interests of students in providing a qualification which facilitates both entry to employment and the opportunity for progression in further education.

Education Partnerships

25. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has any plans to promote among local education authorities schemes for partnerships on the lines of the London Compact launched by the Inner London education authority and the London enterprise agency.

Mrs. Rumbold: Different forms of co-operation will suit different areas, and the Government take every opportunity to promote closer working between education and industry.

Higher Education

27. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in response to his White Paper on higher education.

37. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the recent proposals for changes in university funding; and if he will make a statement.

39. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the White Paper, "Higher Education—Meeting the Challenge."

40. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local authorities concerning the White Paper, "Higher Education — Meeting the Challenge"; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on his recent White Paper on higher education.

43. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the level of resources the Goverment intend to commit towards the achievement of the objectives set out in the White Paper on higher education.

Mr. Walden: Various, mainly favourable, representations have been received from hon. Members and others about the White Paper proposals to widen access to higher education, to re-establish the polytechnics and other major colleges of higher education as free-standing institutions, and to reform the University Grants Committee. My right hon. Friend and I shall be meeting representatives of the local authority associations shortly. Public expenditure on higher education in the United Kingdom is planned to increase to £4·1 billion by 1989-90. These and other plans will be reviewed in the usual way in the annual public expenditure surveys. We have issued a consultative document on the detail of the proposals for the polytechnics and colleges, and will shortly issue another on the proposed Universities Funding Council. Comments from all concerned will be welcome.

34. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the availability of funds for higher education during the 1987-88 period, in the light of the proposals he announced on 1 April, *Official Report*, columns 1097-99.

Mr. Walden: In 1987-88 recurrent funding for the universities will increase by 10 per cent. and for the polytechnics and colleges by 9 per cent. Including the £15 million addition announced on 1 April, the science budget is being increased by 10 per cent.

The Government are confident that these expenditure plans provide the various sectors with the basis for fulfilling their roles to a high level of achievement.

"Better Schools"

29. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the 1985 White Paper entitled "Better Schools" remains Government policy in respect of the recommended size of rural primary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The White Paper set out some general principles concerning the size thresholds at which schools of different types can economically deliver a satisfactory curriculum. My right hon. Friend does not intend these principles to be interpreted as narrowly prescriptive, or as providing a set of bench marks for the closure of schools. Before formulating proposals for the closure of rural schools local authorities and voluntary bodies should take account also of wider considerations including the distances to be travelled to alternative schools in the event of closure and of the age of the children making these journeys.

16-year-olds

30. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of pupils aged 16 years and over have remained in full-time education in Yorkshire and Humberside; and how this compares with the national average.

Mr. Dunn: The percentages of 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education at maintained schools and further education establishments in the academic year 1985-86 in Yorkshire and Humberside and in England were as follows:

	Academic year 1985-86	
	16-year-olds in full-time education (percentage of age group)[1]	*17-year-olds in full-time education (percentage of age group)*[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	42	27
England	46	30

[1] The number of 16 and 17-year-olds expressed as a percentage of the total number of 15-year-olds in maintained secondary schools one or two years earlier respectively.

44. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of pupils aged 16 years and over have remained in full-time education in the north-west; and how this compares with the national average.

Mr. Dunn: The percentages of 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education at maintained schools and further education establishments in the academic year 1985-86 in the north-west and in England were as follows:

	Academic year 1985-86 16-year-olds in full-time education (percentage of age group)[1]	17-year-olds in full-time education (percentage of age group)[1]
North-west	43	30
England	46	30

[1] The number of 16 and 17-year-olds expressed as a percentage of the total number of 15-year-olds in maintained secondary schools one or two years earlier respectively.

Violence in Schools

31. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for the Education and Science what recent research has been carried out to ascertain the possible effect of violence watched on videos by schoolchildren on the level of violence in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am unaware of any recent research in this area. However, in 1983, an informal all-party parliamentary group sponsored an inquiry into the effects of exposing children to scenes of violence on video film. The report of research commissioned by the group was published in 1985 under the title "Video Violence and Children".

Science Budget

32. **Dr. Bray** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much the increase in the science budget which he announced on 1 April exceeds the cost to the research councils of the recent university salaries settlement as it applied to staff employed on research council grants and fellows supported by research councils.

Mr. Walden: About £3·5 million; but there is no simple direct relationship between the academic pay settlement and the additional £15 million for the science budget, announced by my right hon. Friend on 1 April. This additional money has been made available to sustain the work of our most able scientists and their teams.

Research and Development

33. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the current annual aggregate expenditure by his Department on research and development; and how it compares in real terms with the amount spent in 1978-79.

Mr. Walden: Aggregate expenditure on research and development by the Department in 1986-87 is estimated at £1,242 million. Expenditure in 1978-79 at 1986-87 prices was £1,136 million. In 1987-88, the expenditure is expected to exceed £1·3 billion.

Teachers (Essex)

35. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers in Essex are specially qualified to work with dyslexic children and children with other learning disabilities.

Mr. Dunn: The latest available information is for 31 March 1985. On that date, there were 112 full-time teachers employed in schools in Essex who were specially qualified to work with children with learning difficulties. Of these, 51 were in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools and 61 in maintained and grant-aided special schools. Teachers with qualifications to work with dyslexic children are not separately identified.

Illiteracy and Innumeracy

36. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further plans the Government have to tackle the problem of illiteracy and innumeracy amongst young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced his plans for establishing a national foundation curriculum in a statement on 7 April to the Education, Science and Arts Select Committee. Copies of that statement are in the Library. Our aim is to raise standards in schools by ensuring that all pupils receive an education which equips them with essential skills for adult life, and also encourages them to develop their full potential across a range of subjects. At the adult level, my right hon. Friend looks to the adult literacy and basic skills unit to act as a central focus to assist LEAs and voluntary bodies in establishing new basic skills provision and developing existing provision in order to suit the needs of their local communities. He gives high priority to the funding of the unit, and grant has risen four-fold from £470,000 in 1980-81 to an allocation of over £2,050,000 in 1987-88.

Capital Allocation (Lancashire)

42. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received about Lancashire county council's capital allocation for the current year.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received further representations from hon. Members and their constituents, and has also met an all-party delegation from the Lancashire county council.

School Closures

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* those schools in England in which the official school premises have been closed.

Mr. Dunn: Cases where school buildings have had to be closed because of structural damage or for major repairs come to the Department's attention from time to time, mainly in the context of the annual submission by local authorities of their plans for capital expenditure. Authorities are not required to inform the Department of such cases, however, and there is therefore no centrally maintained list.

AIDS (Research)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the medical Research Council has sufficient funds to finance research into the particular features of HIV infection among drug abusers and into its transmission to children identifiable in the Edinburgh region since 1983, and into their implications for the spread of HIV infection.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council has been allocated £17·5 million for AIDS research over the next three years. The council's request for additional resources for AIDS research has been met in full.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the present level of fire precautions in schools and colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has received no general representations about the present level of fire precautions in schools and colleges. The Department's recommended standards for fire precautions are set out in "Building Bulletin 7, Fire and the Design of Schools." This publication is currently being revised and the revision is the subject of consultation with interested parties including the local authority associations.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what surveys he has undertaken to ascertain the effectiveness of fire precautions in schools and colleges.

Mr. Dunn: None.

The statutory responsibility for ensuring that fire precautions are effective in all such educational establishments rests with the local authorities concerned.

First-aid

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recommendations his Department makes for the provision of first-aid on school trips and other out of school activities.

Mr. Dunn: In March 1986 the Department issued a bulletin ("Safety in Education Bulletin No. 4") to local education authorities and to schools, containing general guidance to all involved with the organisation of outdoor pursuits and school expeditions. The bulletin supplemented previous departmental guidance on the subject and in particular drew on lessons arising from the tragic accident at Land's End in 1985.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recommendations his Department makes for first-aid provision in schools and colleges employing fewer than 150 staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department's existing guide on first-aid is contained in the series of safety booklets dealing with various aspects of safety. In addition, Safety Bulletin No. 2 contains general guidance on first-aid. The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 and approved code of practice have implications but focus primarily on the aspect of safety in the place of work. A new document offering guidance on various aspects of first-aid to schools and colleges is being prepared by the Department in consultation with various professional outside experts in the field for issue later this year.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received seeking the application of the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 to schools and colleges employing fewer than 150 staff; and what consideration he has given to the matter.

Mr. Dunn: A few representations have been made from time to time. The requirements applying to first-aid in schools and colleges embodied in both common law and statutes, notably the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the regulations and code of practice deriving from it, are appropriate and my right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce changes.

Tourism

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the establishments in higher education providing graduate and post graduate courses in subjects relating to the tourism industry and the numbers of students under tuition.

Mr. Walden: The Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS) lists the following universities in Great Britain and polytechnics and colleges in England which run first degree or postgraduate courses in tourism, hotel management, hotel and catering management or institutional management:

First Degree
Strathclyde University
Surrey University
University College of Wales (Cardiff)
Huddersfield Polytechnic
Manchester Polytechnic
Middlesex Polytechnic
Newcastle Polytechnic
Polytechnic of North London
Portsmouth Polytechnic
Dorset Institute of Higher Education
Ealing College of Higher Education
New College, Durham
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education

Postgraduate
Birmingham University
Loughborough University
Strathclyde University
Surrey University
Leeds Polytechnic
Manchester Polytechnic
Blackpool and Fylde College of Further and Higher Education
Dorset Institute of Higher Education
South Devon College of Arts and Technology

There were 915 enrolments on first degree and 64 enrolments on postgraduate courses in these subjects in polytechnics and colleges in England in November 1985. Similar data on enrolments for the university sector are not readily available.

Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide funds for the Medical Research Council to carry out research into dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa.

Mr. Walden: It is for the Medical Research Council (MRC) to decide how to apportion the grant-in-aid it receives from the Department's science budget between the various areas of research which it supports. The council is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the grant available to the University Grants Committee will be reduced to

compensate for the partial reimbursement of the community charge for students studying in Scotland; and if he will make a statement on the financial effects on Scottish universities.

Mr. Walden: Scottish universities will continue to pay non-domestic rates. There are no proposals for changing the present arrangements under which these rates are reflected in university grants. We do not expect the introduction of the community charge to have any significant net effect on the financing of universities in Scotland.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will place in the Library a copy of the report, "Site Selection and Characterisation for Deep Radioactive Waste Repositories in Britain: Issues and Research Trends into the 1990s", compiled by the Fluid Processes Group at the British Geological Survey.

Mr. Walden: The report will be published in the Journal of Radioactive Waste Management and the Nuclear Fuel Cycle during the summer. Copies will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Education Support Grant

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what results are being achieved following the allocation of education support grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am glad to announce the publication today of the broadsheet "Encouraging Quality" which describes the excellent results achieved in many areas of activity.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department issues any guidance to local education authorities on the selection of pupils for technical and vocational education initiative courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

The criteria for both the pilot phase of the technical and vocational education initative (TVEI) and its national extension, which have been sent to all local education authorities, indicate that the initiative is intended to cater for students of both sexes across the whole ability range. Proposals for TVEI funding must meet that requirement. However, detailed decisions in respect of the programmes to be followed by individual pupils within the curricular structure offered by individual schools taking part in TVEI are matters for the schools and pupils themselves and the pupils' parents.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Cervical Screening

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health districts within the South-East Thames region have computerised call and recall of women for cervical smear tests.

Mrs. Currie: All district health authorities in the South-East Thames region plan to implement computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening between May 1987 and January 1988. This is within the Government's target date of 31 March 1988 for implementation of such systems.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many places on a local authority basis for England are provided in local authority homes and hostels for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people.

Mrs. Currie: The latest available data (provisional) relating to the position in England at 31 March 1986 are given in the table. Data on group homes may not be fully comprehensive; however, action is in hand to improve future coverage. Further details can be found in the publication, "Homes and Hostels for the Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped at 31 March 1985, England", copies of which are in the Library.

Local authority homes and hostels for people with mental handicap and mental illness
Number of premises and places at 31 March 1986 (provisional)

Local Authority	*Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally handicapped*						*Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally ill*			
		Staffed			*Unstaffed*		*Staffed*		*Unstaffed*	
	Premises	*Children*	*Adults*	*Premises*	*Children*	*Adults*	*Premises*	*Places*	*Premises*	*Places*
Northern Region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Cleveland	13	41	161	8	0	36	3	58	4	15
Cumbria	6	8	112	6	0	23	1	11	7	27
Durham	11	40	207	5	0	18	2	20	10	39
Northumberland	5	0	113	3	0	12	1	8	3	12
Metropolitan County										
Tyne & Wear										
Districts:										
Gateshead	2	0	33	0	0	0	1	14	0	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	3	0	66	4	0	15	2	48	5	20
North Tyneside	4	16	5	7	0	14	1	6	6	23
South Tyneside	2	0	40	0	0	0	12	0	0	0
Sunderland	5	20	89	1	0	4	1	19	0	0
Total	16	36	233	12	0	33	6	99	11	43
Regional total	51	125	826	34	0	122	13	196	35	136

Local Authority	Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally handicapped						Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally ill			
	Staffed			Unstaffed			Staffed		Unstaffed	
	Premises	Children	Adults	Premises	Children	Adults	Premises	Places	Premises	Places
Yorks/Humberside Region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Humberside	16	39	328	0	0	0	1	16	0	0
North Yorkshire	8	26	118	0	0	0	3	56	1	8
Metropolitan County										
South Yorkshire										
Districts:										
Barnsley	2	16	35	0	0	0	1	8	0	0
Doncaster	8	28	75	12	0	48	2	22	7	23
Rotherham	2	0	31	2	0	9	1	23	1	8
Sheffield	8	47	147	9	0	31	3	44	1	3
Total	20	91	288	23	0	88	7	97	9	34
Metropolitan County										
West Yorkshire										
Districts:										
Bradford	9	31	149	12	0	43	3	76	9	49
Calderdale	3	10	48	1	0	4	1	7	1	4
Kirklees	6	25	83	1	0	2	1	21	4	18
Leeds	13	32	255	17	0	62	3	72	11	38
Wakefield	6	21	72	0	0	0	1	12	4	18
Total	37	119	607	31	0	111	9	188	29	127
Regional total	81	275	1,341	54	0	199	20	357	39	169
North Western Region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Cheshire	13	100	209	17	0	127	3	20	16	56
Lancashire	28	93	453	8	0	30	7	87	3	14
Metropolitan County										
Greater Manchester										
Districts:										
Bolton	3	24	52	0	0	0	2	15	4	18
Bury	4	13	70	2	0	7	0	0	0	0
Manchester	22	90	136	15	0	71	2	60	17	85
Oldham	4	6	83	0	0	0	3	38	3	8
Rochdale	5	10	62	0	0	0	2	21	0	0
Salford	5	0	128	4	0	17	3	40	0	0
Stockport	8	0	88	11	0	47	2	21	8	29
Tameside	5	6	98	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trafford	2	0	55	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
Wigan	10	28	151	6	0	18	1	16	0	0
Total	68	177	923	38	0	160	15	211	34	146
Metropolitan County										
Merseyside										
Districts:										
Knowsley	4	22	71	2	0	12	1	15	0	0
Liverpool	3	0	163	0	0	0	10	80	1	8
Sefton	5	10	87	0	0	0	1	14	0	0
St. Helens	4	14	73	0	0	0	1	20	0	0
Wirral	8	23	108	0	0	0	2	22	0	0
Total	24	69	502	2	0	12	15	151	1	8
Regional total	133	439	2,087	65	0	329	40	469	54	224
East Midlands Region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Derbyshire	8	16	168	0	0	0	1	12	27	91
Leicestershire	9	37	152	0	0	0	2	45	1	7
Lincolnshire	8	31	174	8	0	32	2	32	6	38
Northamptonshire	6	6	106	10	0	43	1	33	11	43
Nottinghamshire	8	18	189	0	0	0	1	23	0	0
Regional total	39	108	789	18	0	75	7	145	45	179
West Midlands region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Hereford & Worcester	11	35	150	2	0	8	3	56	7	14

Local Authority	Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally handicapped						Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally ill			
		Staffed			Unstaffed		Staffed		Unstaffed	
	Premises	Children	Adults	Premises	Children	Adults	Premises	Places	Premises	Places
Shropshire	4	0	111	10	0	40	1	29	1	4
Staffordshire	18	129	360	6	0	39	3	61	13	67
Warwickshire	2	14	17	5	0	16	0	0	0	0
Metropolitan County										
West Midlands										
Districts:										
Birmingham	14	57	253	20	0	59	1	24	17	56
Coventry	10	25	115	3	0	11	3	48	4	17
Dudley	3	0	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sandwell	3	0	82	0	0	0	3	85	0	0
Solihull	3	0	94	2	0	7	1	28	3	18
Walsall	7	17	131	0	0	0	1	11	2	9
Wolverhampton	8	34	101	0	0	0	2	35	4	16
Total	48	133	820	25	0	77	11	231	30	116
Regional total	83	311	1,458	48	0	180	18	377	51	201
London and North Region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Bedfordshire	11	50	142	5	0	15	1	16	2	14
Berkshire	9	65	173	20	0	77	2	26	6	22
Buckinghamshire	10	33	142	15	0	68	1	21	5	22
Cambridgeshire	6	9	91	12	0	61	0	0	6	28
Essex	16	77	304	0	0	0	1	24	0	0
Hertfordshire	12	39	255	23	0	88	2	48	15	55
Norfolk	13	30	108	9	0	43	0	0	7	28
Oxfordshire	8	42	118	3	0	16	0	0	3	12
Suffolk	7	39	91	19	0	64	1	20	12	40
Regional total	92	384	1,424	106	0	432	8	155	56	221
London Region										
Inner London										
Camden	3	0	51	0	0	0	1	7	0	0
Greenwich	5	19	58	0	0	0	2	42	2	14
Hackney	3	15	48	0	0	0	1	20	0	0
Hammersmith	3	0	28	0	0	0	2	22	0	0
Islington	3	24	19	0	0	0	1	20	1	5
Kensington	1	0	24	0	0	0	1	16	0	0
Lambeth	2	0	26	0	0	0	1	45	0	0
Lewisham	4	12	70	7	0	42	1	50	0	0
Southwark	7	14	74	0	0	0	1	12	2	12
Tower Hamlets	2	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wandsworth	6	14	80	0	0	0	4	70	1	10
Westminster	1	0	28	1	0	9	2	39	2	17
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regional total	40	98	538	8	0	51	17	343	8	58
London Region										
Outer London										
Barking	3	0	62	3	0	17	0	0	5	19
Barnet	3	13	56	1	0	5	1	8	2	12
Bexley	5	13	60	0	0	0	2	31	0	0
Brent	7	32	55	1	0	4	4	47	1	5
Bromley	3	12	52	2	0	8	0	0	0	0
Croydon	4	8	55	1	0	5	3	31	5	30
Ealing	5	34	38	2	0	8	2	44	5	30
Enfield	2	20	43	1	0	10	2	50	1	5
Haringey	5	16	54	0	0	0	1	20	2	12
Harrow	4	8	54	1	0	6	1	20	1	5
Havering	6	0	115	2	0	7	1	11	7	28
Hillingdon	9	16	117	3	0	15	2	49	5	31
Hounslow	4	24	40	1	0	3	1	21	3	11
Kingston-upon-Thames	2	16	15	1	0	4	0	0	0	0
Merton	2	0	39	4	0	14	0	0	3	15
Newham	2	19	50	6	0	18	1	33	9	23
Redbridge	2	0	32	0	0	0	1	11	0	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	3	0	57	0	0	0	1	20	1	4
Sutton	1	0	25	1	0	8	1	16	1	3
Waltham Forest	4	12	51	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Local Authority	Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally handicapped						Local Authority homes and hostels for the mentally ill			
		Staffed			Unstaffed		Staffed		Unstaffed	
	Premises	Children	Adults	Premises	Children	Adults	Premises	Places	Premises	Places
Regional total	76	243	1,070	30	0	132	24	412	51	233
Southern Region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Dorset	9	15	157	3	0	8	2	45	9	36
Hampshire	14	28	306	5	0	30	0	0	9	38
Isle of Wight	2	11	25	5	0	17	0	0	2	7
Kent	9	9	203	6	0	25	2	42	19	86
Surrey	9	70	150	0	0	0	1	20	2	15
East Sussex	14	61	204	10	0	48	1	16	10	51
West Sussex	10	43	182	6	0	23	1	14	1	4
Wiltshire	7	10	176	6	0	18	1	15	8	31
Regional total	74	247	1,403	41	0	169	8	152	60	268
South Western Region										
Non-Metropolitan Counties										
Avon	10	14	152	13	0	40	2	29	6	22
Cornwall	4	21	64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Devon	15	0	199	3	0	11	0	0	7	28
Gloucestershire	6	16	133	12	0	39	0	0	16	53
Somerset	16	40	145	20	0	62	1	11	11	32
Regional total	51	91	693	48	0	152	3	40	40	135

Hospital Construction

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will report on progress on hospital construction within the North Western regional health authority area; which programmes have been delayed; and if he will make a detailed statement regarding each such delay.

Mrs. Currie: In the North-Western region, there are 77 health building schemes each costing over £1 million at various stages of planning, design and construction. The total value of this programme which will make a major contribution to the National Health Service estate in the region is estimated at £500 million.

Responsibility for the management of this capital programme lies with the North-Western regional health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to pursue any inquiries with the chairman of the authority.

Nurses

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses (i) entered and (ii) left the nursing profession in the last year for which figures are available in *(a)* the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority, *(b)* the North Western regional health authority and *(c)* the National Health Service in England and Wales.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) on 22 April at column *625*.

No information is available on the number of qualified nurses and midwives entering and leaving the nursing profession in the North-Westen regional health authority and the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority. It would not necessarily be correct to estimate the number on the basis of the figures for England as a whole produced by the Institute of Manpower Studies.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the average gross earnings of *(a)* secretarial, *(b)* clerical staff in the National Health Service in the north west region; and what are the average gross weekly earnings of secretarial and clerical staff (i) in the north west region and (ii) in England;

(2) how many *(a)* secretarial and *(b)* clerical workers in the National Health Service in the north west region have gross weekly earnings of (i) more than £120, (ii) between £110 and £120, (iii) between £80 and £100 and (iv) less than £80; and what percentage each category represents.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available centrally. Clerical and secretarial staff are paid on one of the following national pay scales.

	Basic pay rate from 1 April 1986	
	Minimum adult rate (21 or over)	Maximum
	£	£
Clerical—routine duties	4,112	4,954
Clerical—full duties	4,112	5,628
Higher clerical grade	5,418	6,556
General administrative assistant	6,556	8,562
Copy typists/machine operators—normal	4,226	4,956
Copy typists/machine operators—extended	4,226	5,377
Shorthand typists—normal	4,508	5,141
Shorthand typists—extended	4,508	5,628
Supervisors scale 1	4,912	5,855
Supervisors scale 2	5,387	6,312

In addition to basic pay such staff may receive, where appropriate, London weighting and allowances for secretarial qualifications.

NHS (Staff)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of *(a)* secretarial and *(b)* clerical staff in the north west region of the National Health Service are women.

Mr. Newton: I shall give the hon. Member such information as is available as soon as possible.

Doctors' Lists

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the size of general practitioners' lists in *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle, *(c)* Lancashire and *(d)* England, respectively.

Mr. Newton: As at 1 October 1985 the average list size for unrestricted principals in England was 2,068 patients. The figure for unrestricted principals covered by the Lancashire family practitioner committee was 2,120.

Information is not held centrally in the form requested for Burnley or Pendle.

Nursing and Residential Homes

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by each appropriate local authority, the number of private nursing homes and private residential homes registered, and the number of beds involved.

Mrs. Currie: For the latest available district health authority information, I refer the hon. Member to the summary booklet of private hospitals, homes and clinics statistics 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

Figures for residential care homes run privately (including those operated by voluntary organisations) are given in the table.

Registered private and voluntary homes for persons who are elderly, disabled, mentally handicapped or mentally ill. Number of homes and places at 31 March 1986 (provisional)

England — *Numbers*

Local authority within regions	*All registered homes*		*Voluntary homes*		*Private homes*	
	Homes	*Places*	*Homes*	*Places*	*Homes*	*Places*
Northern						
Cleveland	29	421	3	110	26	311
Cumbria	64	1,132	8	159	56	973
Durham	28	506	4	141	24	365
Northumberland	35	709	7	272	28	437
Gateshead	10	168	2	52	8	116
Newcastle upon Tyne	32	706	9	317	23	389
North Tyneside	38	733	2	72	36	661
South Tyneside	11	196	1	10	10	186
Sunderland	17	382	2	93	15	289
Total	264	4,953	38	1,226	226	3,727
Yorks/Humberside						
Humberside	150	2,385	7	180	143	2,205
North Yorkshire	219	3,458	25	822	194	2,636
Barnsley	10	193	1	5	9	188
Doncaster	20	377	2	80	18	297
Rotherham	12	122	6	40	6	82
Sheffield	19	312	5	90	14	222
Bradford	92	1,566	5	84	87	1,482
Calderdale	25	378	3	72	22	306
Kirklees	30	494	3	60	27	434
Leeds	54	983	11	446	43	537
Wakefield	20	323	4	81	16	242
Total	651	10,591	72	1,960	579	8,631
North Western						
Cheshire	89	1,890	31	971	58	919
Lancashire	439	6,809	29	957	410	5,852
Bolton	25	375	4	82	21	293
Bury	16	656	6	486	10	170
Manchester	66	1,040	8	233	58	807
Oldham	26	495	3	46	23	449
Rochdale	12	299	1	31	11	268
Salford	13	320	9	252	4	68
Stockport	42	596	2	48	40	548
Tameside	19	350	4	127	15	223
Trafford	46	693	8	184	38	509
Wigan	10	127	2	26	8	101
Knowsley	2	38	0	0	2	38
Liverpool	52	1,391	28	904	24	487
Sefton	126	2,692	25	1,111	101	1,581

Local authority within regions	All registered homes		Voluntary homes		Private homes	
	Homes	Places	Homes	Places	Homes	Places
St. Helens	6	172	3	80	3	92
Wirral	78	1,115	9	177	69	938
Total	1,067	19,058	172	5,715	895	13,343
West Midlands						
Hereford & Worcester	155	2,510	19	528	136	1,982
Shropshire	82	1,251	1	31	81	1,220
Staffordshire	107	1,800	14	404	93	1,396
Warwickshire	92	1,293	38	492	54	801
Birmingham	140	2,278	35	786	105	1,492
Coventry	50	578	13	85	37	493
Dudley	37	566	5	105	32	461
Sandwell	7	123	0	0	7	123
Solihull	13	308	7	183	6	125
Walsall	16	199	0	0	16	199
Wolverhampton	25	360	4	105	21	255
Total	724	11,266	136	2,719	588	8,547
East Midlands						
Derbyshire	124	2,007	17	436	107	1,571
Leicestershire	109	1,582	18	554	91	1,028
Lincolnshire	101	1,740	9	270	92	1,470
Northamptonshire	82	1,278	14	385	68	893
Nottinghamshire	148	1,701	22	368	126	1,333
Total	564	8,308	80	2,013	484	6,295
Thames Anglia						
Bedfordshire	54	905	11	274	43	631
Berkshire	106	2,011	34	979	72	1,032
Buckinghamshire	62	1,444	30	923	32	521
Cambridgeshire	63	1,137	10	336	53	801
Essex	239	4,125	54	1,602	185	2,523
Hertfordshire	99	2,206	34	1,044	65	1,162
Norfolk	230	3,794	25	675	205	3,119
Oxfordshire	41	901	16	425	25	476
Suffolk	113	2,064	23	562	90	1,502
Total	1,007	18,587	237	6,820	770	11,767
Inner London						
Camden	14	335	11	264	3	71
Greenwich	9	402	2	24	7	378
Hackney	8	162	4	147	4	15
Hammersmith	2	121	1	105	1	16
Islington	6	140	5	108	1	32
Kensington	22	882	21	839	1	43
Lambeth	21	384	11	220	10	164
Lewisham	23	306	4	57	19	249
Southwark	12	357	12	357	0	0
Tower Hamlets	4	150	4	150	0	0
Wandsworth	22	1,251	17	1,092	5	159
Westminster	7	92	7	92	0	0
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	150	4,582	99	3,455	51	1,127
Outer London						
Barking	2	38	0	0	2	38
Barnet	60	1,599	26	1,089	34	510
Bexley	4	42	1	5	3	37
Brent	15	253	7	179	8	74
Bromley	51	1,048	27	710	24	338
Croydon	69	1,156	18	429	51	727
Ealing	39	771	17	449	22	322
Enfield	39	492	5	80	34	412
Haringey	31	644	23	491	8	153
Harrow	31	536	5	165	26	371
Havering	15	262	1	12	14	250
Hillingdon	9	178	5	121	4	57
Hounslow	5	203	4	199	1	4
Kingston upon Thames	18	228	4	54	14	174
Merton	22	339	8	187	14	152
Newham	7	195	5	171	2	24

Local authority within regions	All registered homes		Voluntary homes		Private homes	
	Homes	Places	Homes	Places	Homes	Places
Redbridge	23	422	7	183	16	239
Richmond upon Thames	18	583	13	497	5	86
Sutton	27	509	8	218	19	291
Waltham Forest	13	188	2	38	11	150
Total	498	9,686	186	5,277	312	4,409
Southern						
Dorset	325	4,600	26	643	299	3,957
Hampshire	421	6,546	46	1,151	375	5,395
Isle of Wight	85	1,357	7	173	78	1,184
Kent	239	4,574	64	1,490	175	3,084
Surrey	202	4,367	77	2,369	125	1,998
East Sussex	420	7,929	48	1,852	372	6,077
West Sussex	347	5,494	57	1,447	290	4,047
Wiltshire	106	1,583	16	348	90	1,235
Total	2,145	36,450	341	9,473	1,804	26,977
South Western						
Avon	237	3,619	58	1,201	179	2,418
Cornwall	188	2,873	14	338	174	2,535
Devon	618	9,990	54	1,299	564	8,691
Gloucestershire	101	1,680	25	671	76	1,009
Somerset	101	1,711	12	339	89	1,372
Total	1,245	19,873	163	3,848	1,082	16,025
England	8,315	143,354	1,524	42,506	6,791	100,848

Drug Addicts

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the number of beds, and their location, in the North-West regional health authority area intended for registered drug addicts.

Mrs. Currie: Most people admitted for drug misuse are treated in general psychiatric wards and not in beds specifically assigned for drug misusers. On 31 December 1985 there were six beds available in the North-Western regional health authority area exclusively for the treatment of drug misuse. These were in a special in-patient unit in Prestwich hospital, Manchester.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the National Health Service waiting list numbers in Exeter for each of the years 1975 to 1986.

Mr. Newton: Following is the information requested for the Exeter district health authority since its establishment in April 1982; the figures are for the number of cases on the in-patient waiting list at 30 September.

Year	Number of cases
1982	4,436
1983	4,823
1984	4,555
1985	4,638
1986	4,639

Junior Hospital Doctors

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of junior hospital doctors are currently working more than 72 hours a week; and what progress he has made in reducing the hours worked by junior hospital doctors, as recommended by the Social Services Committee in its report in July 1981.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available in the form requested.

On 30 September 1986, 81 per cent. of junior hospital doctors and dentists in England and Wales were contracted for more than 72 hours a week. Encouraging progress has been made in reducing juniors' hours since 1981. We have banned rotas requiring a junior to be on duty, on average, more than one night and weekend in two, and we have asked health authorities to aim for a target maximum commitment of one in three—broadly equivalent to 84 contracted hours—or better. Between 1982 and 1985 we estimate that the number of posts in England with rotas more onerous than one in three fell or was planned to fall from 5,000 to 3,500, representing 18·4 per cent. of all the posts concerned. Recent indications are that there may still be a number of practitioners with excessive rota commitments, and we are currently seeking details of each case. Overall, contracted hours have continued to fall, from 88·9 in 1980 to 85·7 in 1986. These figures denote hours of availability rather than work; but independent surveys commissioned by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration indicate that average hours of work have also fallen, from 58·3 in 1981 to 57 in 1985.

Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brent, East on 3 April, *Official Report*, column 654, he will make it his policy to fund research into dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa.

Mrs. Currie: We are always willing to consider proposals for research, although, as I indicated in my

earlier reply, the main Government agency for the funding of biomedical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council.

Pensioners

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost of giving single pensioners with no other sources of income an extra £5 per week and pensioner couples £8 per week assuming no change in social security benefits.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Chiropody

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to reduce the risk of cross-infection arising from the chiropodial treatment of patients who may be carrying blood-borne viruses of the hepatitis B and HIV types.

Mr. Newton: Specific guidelines for the prevention of the spread of HIV and other viruses are being prepared for a range of services, including chiropody, which involve practices in which the skin may be pierced.

District health authorities already have general control of infection policies which will apply to chiropodists working for them.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will seek to introduce compulsory registration to ensure that only persons who have completed a course of training recognised by the Chiropodists Board of the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine are allowed to practise chiropody; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: In the absence of general agreement among all the groups which might be affected, we have no present plans for legislation of the kind the hon. Member has in mind.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available in the precise form requested.

Sexually transmitted diseases are not notifiable and figures are not available about those who receive private treatment or treatment from their general practitioners. The table shows the number of new cases treated in National Health Service genito-urinary medicine clinics in England and Wales. These are thought to represent about 90 per cent. of all cases. Figures for Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and for Northern Ireland my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

New cases of sexually transmitted diseases seen at NHS genito-urinary medicine clinics: England and Wales
(A patient may be recorded under more than one condition, or recorded more than once in recurrent cases of the same condition.)

	1976	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
New cases of syphilis	4,037	4,455	4,513	4,107	4,167	3,928	3,664	3,483	3,101	2,558
New cases of gonorrhoea	60,126	60,082	57,995	56,230	55,597	53,301	53,213	49,609	48,878	47,453
Chancroid etc.[1]	119	99	95	108	107	162	175	142	92	110
Non-specific genital infection (incl. with arthritis)	94,984	97,916	100,516	104,721	116,858	122,777	131,214	137,159	142,663	153,199
Trichomoniasis	20,316	20,415	20,067	19,830	20,938	20,544	20,381	18,557	17,000	15,644
Candidiasis	37,324	38,928	40,351	40,564	45,640	48,389	53,690	59,242	60,905	61,872
Scabies	2,518	2,291	2,284	2,147	2,337	2,213	2,104	2,269	2,114	2,080
Pubic lice (pediculosis pubis)	5,686	6,217	6,932	7,638	8,156	8,911	9,982	9,319	10,470	10,147
Herpes simplex	7,130	7,899	8,589	9,048	10,261	11,539	14,148	16,987	18,916	19,283
Warts (condylomata acuminata)	22,495	23,386	24,678	25,104	28,939	30,462	34,097	38,953	45,437	53,638
Molluscum contagiosum	897	942	975	989	1,173	1,237	1,399	1,593	1,964	2,242
Other treponemal diseases	1,140	1,114	1,082	1,091	927	883	838	746	662	598
Other conditions requiring treatment	39,967	43,624	47,722	50,936	61,531	69,298	80,495	92,607	102,071	110,980
Other conditions[2] not requiring treatment or referred elsewhere	93,285	99,780	103,878	104,496	112,509	117,370	123,189	129,500	129,007	138,866

[1] Includes Chancroid, Lymphogranuloma venereum and Granuloma inguinale.
[2] This refers to those who, on examination, are found to have no condition requiring treatment.

Familial Hyperlipidaemia

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will produce figures for the last three years for each region showing the incidence of patients diagnosed as having familial hyperlipidaemia with particular reference to the sex and age when diagnosed of patients;

(2) whether he will recommend that tests for familial hyperlipidaemia are included in medical examinations for all members of the armed forces, the police force and the Civil Service.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 April 1987, c. *31*]: Familial hyperlipidoemia (FH) (excess of fatty substances in the blood) is an inherited condition, causing an increased risk of heart attack and sometimes stroke at an early age. Information on the incidence of the condition is not collected centrally.

A workshop, on screening for risk of coronary heart disease, held at the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, in November 1985, concluded that there was no justification at the present time for general screening of the population. Since there is no professional or scientific consensus on the need for general population screening, it would not be appropriate to undertake routine tests on members of individual professions at present.

The Family Heart Association makes available information on this condition.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of actual deaths in each week from 1 January to 31 March each year since 1979, what was the expected number of deaths for each of those weeks based on historical experience, and what was the percentage difference between the two.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her replies*, 21 January 1987, c. *623* and 25 February 1987, c. *328-30*]: The calculations on the expected number of weekly deaths at age one year and over for the years 1979 to 1982 have been completed, and the figures are shown in the tables. Also shown is the information carried forward for the current year.

An explanation of the methods used to calculate the expected number of deaths is given in "Population Trends No. 34", a copy of which is in the Library.

Numbers of deaths at age 1 year and over registered each week (actual deaths), expected deaths based on experience of previous ten years, and percentage differences: Week 1 to Week 13, 1979-1987 (England and Wales)

Week Number/ Ending	Actual Deaths (a)	Expected Deaths (b)	Percentage Difference $\left(\frac{a-b}{b} \times 100\right)$
Weekly deaths aged 1 year and over 1979:			
[1] 5 January	12,754	13,929	−8·44
2 12 January	15,089	14,578	3·51
3 19 January	13,558	13,663	−0·77
4 26 January	13,618	12,833	6·12
5 2 February	13,695	12,555	9·08
6 9 February	13,028	12,656	2·94
7 16 February	12,853	12,922	−0·53
8 23 February	14,236	13,012	9·41
9 2 March	13,264	12,914	2·71
10 9 March	13,039	12,892	1·14
11 16 March	12,487	12,724	−1·86
12 23 March	12,767	12,379	3·13
13 30 March	12,503	11,987	4·30
Weekly deaths aged 1 year and over 1980:			
[1] 4 January	11,931	13,583	−12·16
2 11 January	13,314	14,097	−5·55
3 18 January	13,146	13,251	−0·79
4 25 January	13,270	12,744	4·13
5 1 February	12,807	12,622	1·47
6 8 February	12,429	12,769	−2·66
7 15 February	11,780	13,133	−10·30
8 22 February	11,387	13,322	−14·52
9 29 February	11,420	13,164	−13·25
10 7 March	11,322	12,963	−12·66
11 14 March	11,464	12,745	−10·05
12 21 March	11,754	12,387	−5·11
13 28 March	12,594	12,009	4·87
Weekly deaths age 1 year and over 1981:			
[1] 9 January	12,398	13,531	−8·37
2 16 January	12,599	14,195	−11·24
3 23 January	13,267	13,245	0·17
4 30 January	12,534	12,792	−2·02
5 6 February	11,876	12,856	−7·62
6 13 February	11,779	12,914	−8·79
7 20 February	12,159	13,165	−7·64
8 27 February	12,700	13,384	−5·11
9 6 March	13,346	13,052	2·25
10 13 March	12,633	12,897	−2·05
11 20 March	11,785	12,613	−6·56
12 27 March	11,596	12,327	−5·93
13 3 April	10,888	11,981	−9·12
Weekly deaths aged 1 year and over 1982:			
[1] 8 January	11,978	12,785	−6·31
2 15 January	14,461	13,709	5·49
3 22 January	13,820	13,206	4·65
4 29 January	12,517	12,929	−3·19
5 5 February	12,039	12,978	−7·24
6 12 February	11,611	13,000	−10·68
7 19 February	11,555	13,107	−11·84
8 26 February	12,195	13,348	−8·64
9 5 March	12,822	13,067	−1·87
10 12 March	12,302	12,846	−4·23
11 19 March	12,319	12,579	−2·07
12 26 March	11,862	12,386	−4·23
[2][13] 2 April	11,888	12,127	−1·97
Weekly deaths aged 1 year and over 1987:			
[1] 9 January	11,658	12,140	−3·79
2 16 January	12,164	13,542	−10·18
3 23 January	14,040	12,978	8·18
4 30 January	12,357	13,023	−5·11
5 6 February	12,083	12,699	−4·85
6 13 February	11,446	12,466	−8·18
7 20 February	11,461	12,728	−9·95
8 27 February	11,449	13,213	−13·35
9 6 March	11,315	13,361	−15·31
10 13 March	11,293	12,988	−13·05
11 20 March	11,512	12,426	−7·36
12 27 March	11,416	12,194	−6·38
13 3 April	10,994	12,152	−9·53

Expected figures calculated using 1981 projected populations based on the mid-1979 total population (estimated from 1971 census data).

[1] Actual deaths averaged for the three weeks covering Christmas and new year.

[2] Actual deaths in the two weeks containing Easter Friday and Easter Sunday are averaged.

Figures for actual deaths are based on occurrences rather than registrations due to the registrars' dispute.

[3] Actual deaths averaged for the four weeks covering Christmas and New Year.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 29 April 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Computers

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *471*, about computer usage in schools, what steps are taken by his Department to monitor the results of spending on computers in schools; how he measures the performance of different schools; and what recent representations he has received from Her Majesty's inspectors on this subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department undertook a survey in 1985 on the use of computers in schools and related expenditure, copies of which are in the Library. A further survey is planned for this autumn, and thereafter at biennial intervals. Whilst the Department has not undertaken systematic performance measurements of individual schools in the field of information technology, reports by Her Majesty's inspectorate often include observations on this.

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the nature and scale of research related to multiple sclerosis supported by public funds.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council is the main Government agency for the support of biomedical research. I understand that the council is supporting a number of research projects on multiple sclerosis, including both basic work on the nature of the disease and clinical studies of its treatment. In the financial year 1985-86, the last year for which figures are available, the council spent £403,000 on research into multiple sclerosis. The council is always willing to consider soundly based research grant applications in competition with other applicants.

I understand that research into multiple sclerosis is also carried out in universities and medical schools using funds for teaching and research allocated on advice from the University Grants Committee. The Government are not in a position to influence directly the scale and nature of this research activity.

Freshwater Fisheries Biological Association

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what changes have been made in the funds granted to the Freshwater Fisheries Biological Association through the Natural Environment Research Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The funds granted to the FBA through the NERC for the last four years have been as follows:

£000

Science Budget Grant-in-Aid	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
General (net of receipts)	1,357	1,373	1,471	1,440
Pensions (net of receipts)	154	85	104	177
Transfer of Centre for Culture of Algae and Protozoa (CCAP) (net of receipts)	—	—	—	338
Total Grant-in-Aid	1,511	1,458	1,575	1,955

The grant-in-aid from the science budget for 1987-88 has yet to be finally decided but it is expected to be about £1,508,000 made up as follows:

£000

Science Budget Grant-in-Aid	
General (net of receipts)	1,310
Pensions (net of receipts)	123
Transfer of CCAP (net of receipts)	75
Total Grant-in-Aid	1,508

The FBA council has recently made proposals to the NERC as to how the reduction in total income, arising largely from lower expected commissioned receipts, may be met. Representatives of the NERC and the FBA are to meet shortly to discuss these proposals.

Hay Fever

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there are any plans for a programme of research into the treatment and cure of hay fever; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council is the main Government agency for the support of biomedical research. In the financial year 1985-86, the last year for which figures are available, the Council spent approximately £616,000 on research projects directly and indirectly related to hay fever. The council is always willing to consider soundly based research grant applications in competition with other applicants.

Research into hay fever may also be carried out in universities and medical schools using funds for teaching and research allocated on advice from the University Grants Committee. The Government are not in a position to influence directly the scale and nature of this research activity.

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any recent representations from teachers, parents or pupils in Hertfordshire regarding the current dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department has received letters expressing a variety of views about teachers' pay and conditions of employment from teachers, parents and pupils in a range of local education authorities.

Secondary Pupils (Costs)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the appropriate cost of educating a secondary school pupil in inner and outer London; and what is the approximate grant provided by Government to cover those costs.

Mr. Dunn: The net recurrent expenditure per secondary school pupil in ILEA and the average for the outer London boroughs in 1984-85 were £1,940 and £1,250 respectively. Most Government support for local authority education is provided through the block grant element of rate support grant, which is an unhypothecated grant in support of all services. It is not possible to identify a particular element as being in support of secondary education.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will break down the pupil-teacher ratio given in table 3.12.4 of the public expenditure White Paper between primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: Pupil-teacher ratios within maintained primary and secondary schools in England each year from 1982 to 1986 are given in the table. These figures differ from the overall pupil-teacher ratios given in table 3.12.4 of the public expenditure White Paper as they include qualified teachers only and exclude teachers employed by LEAs who were not in schools on the census day. Projections for future years are not available. The Government's expenditure plans assume a continuing improvement in the overall pupil-teacher ratio up to 1990 in order to give effect to their policies for the schools. The plans do not consider how this improvement might be reflected in pupil-teacher ratios within the primary and secondary sectors. The Government look to local authorities and schools to take advantage of the improved overall pupil-teacher ratio by employing teaching staff to the greatest benefit of the pupils.

January each year	*Pupil/teacher ratios within schools*	
	Primary	*Secondary*
1982	22·5	16·6
1983	22·3	16·5
1984	22·1	16·2
1985	22·2	16·1
1986	22·1	15·9

"Outlaws in the Classroom"

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what complaints he has received under section 46 of the Education (No.2) Act 1986 about the booklet concerning homosexuality entitled "Outlaws in the Classroom" which is being circulated by some teachers in schools in the Leicester area; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has today received correspondence from my hon. Friend concerning this booklet. He is giving careful consideration to the points raised and will write to him in due course.

School Closures

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider the criteria for closure of secondary schools in rural areas with a view to varying the guidelines on minimum size.

Mr. Dunn: The advice in the draft circular "Providing for Quality" on the desirable minimum sizes of different types of school is not intended to be interpreted as narrowly prescriptive. It makes it clear that, for geographical and other reasons, it might not always be possible to bring all schools up to the recommended sizes. My right hon. Friend is currently considering the draft circular in the light of various comments made on it.

ENERGY

Sizewell B

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what specific areas of the Central Electricity Generating Board safety case for Sizewell B have yet to be fully accepted for licensing purposes by the Nuclear Installions Inspectorate.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend informed the House in his statement of 12 March, at columns 475-7, that the NII judges that there are no safety obstacles of substance to the issue of the licence. The NII are now finalising the drafting of the pre-construction safety report with the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy; further to his statement on 12 March, *Official Report*, columns 475-77, if he intends to publish in full the final pre-construction safety report and the final safety review as soon as they are available, as recommended by Sir Frank Layfield in the Sizewell B inquiry report.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend accepted this recommendation in principle in his letter of 12 March 1987 to the chairman of the CEGB giving his consent to the station. He urged the CEGB to publish these reports insofar as it can do so within the constraints of commercial sensitivity, as soon as possible after it has submitted them to the NII. My right hon. Friend has placed a copy of his letter in the Library.

Power Station Sites

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list by year and location the urban and non-urban power station sites owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board which were sold between 1979 and 1985;

(2) if he will list by location the urban and non-urban power station sites owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board which were sold in 1986;

(3) if he will list by location the urban and non-urban power station sites owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board which are currently for sale.

Mr. Goodlad: The sale of power station sites in England and Wales is the responsibility of the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Renewable Energy Sources

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what the annual expenditure by his Department for renewable sources of energy has been for the period 1979 to 1986.

Mr. David Hunt: Expenditure on my Department's programme for research, development and demonstration into renewable sources of energy during the period 1979 to 1986 including external contributions is set out in the table:

	£ million
1979-80	8·9
1980-81	12·3
1981-82	19·2
1982-83	17·9
1983-84	13·7
1984-85	18·2
1985-86	15·3

Notes:

(1) Where available figures include expenditure on waste as a fuel and passive solar under the energy efficiency demonstraton scheme; contributions from external contractors and the European Commission.

(2) Information on spend by contractors is estimated from the contractual link with Department spend in many cases and thus may not be exact. In particular, it may be a few months out in its allocation and therefore spend from one year may have been moved to another year.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated advertising and promotional expenditure for energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy by his Department for 1987.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimated expenditure for the current financial year is £7,580,000.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the annual advertising and promotional expenditure for energy efficiency by his Department, British Gas, the Central Electricity Generating Board, the Electricity Council and British Coal for the period 1979 to 1986.

Mr. David Hunt: Expenditure by the Department of Energy is as follows:

	£
1979-80	73,000
1980-81	40,000
1981-82	74,000
1982-83	511,000
1983-84	1,827,000
1984-85	7,961,000
1985-86	12,132,000

Advertising and promotional expenditure on energy efficiency by the industries referred to is decided by the boards of those industries. I have therefore asked the chairmen of the industries concerned to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the annual advertising and promotional expenditure for nuclear power by his Department, the Central Electricity Generating Board, the Electricity Council, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and the South of Scotland Electricity Board for the period 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Goodlad: Advertising and promotion by the CEGB, the Electricity Council, BNFL and the SSEB fall within the commercial responsibilities of these organisations, and I have asked the chairmen to write to the hon. Member.

The Government fund a public information programme about civil nuclear power carried out by the UKAEA. Expenditure in the current year is expected to be about £2·5 million. I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnyd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 26 June 1986 at column 270, in which I gave details of expenditure in previous years.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the current estimated costs in 1986 prices for a commercial demonstration fast breeder reactor.

Mr. Goodlad: No commercial demonstration fast reactor has been built in the United Kingdom. The capital cost of such a station would depend upon the design, the time of the order, and other factors.

Gas Explosions

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how many claims have been made against British Gas for compensation for personal injury or damage to property in the event of gas explosions; and how many were settled in the claimants' favour.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have asked the chairman of British Gas to write to the hon. Member.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Paraguay

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what official visitors from Paraguay have been received by the Government since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The following Paraguayan Ministers have visited the United Kingdom between 1979 and April 1987 in an official capacity:

Dr. Ugarte Centurion, Minister for Industry and Commerce, May 1980 and April 1983;
Dr. Nogues, Foreign Minister, June 1981;
Dr. Saldivar, Foreign Minister, March 1986.

A number of other Paraguayans, including officials, parliamentarians, businessmen, lawyers and journalists, have visited the United Kingdom under the FCO sponsored visits scheme.

Diplomatic Missions (Parking Fines)

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish up-to-date figures indicating in numerical order, the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by each diplomatic mission in the last quarter for which figures are available; if he will publish, in alphabetical order by country, the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by each diplomatic mission in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested by my hon. Friend is given in the tables. the tables also include those international organisations which have incurred unpaid fines. The figures may be reduced by late payments.

The annual total for 1986 (23,237) is only 21 per cent. of the total for 1984 (108,932). We welcome this very significant reduction, and expect it to continue in the future. We shall continue to take firm action against the worst offenders, and will also be writing to those few missions which showed a significant increase in the number of unpaid fines in 1986 over 1985.

Fixed penalty notices cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity (Metropolitan Police District)

Organisation/Country	*1985*	*1986*
Afghanistan	20	14
Algeria	939	254
Antigua and Barbuda	0	0
Australia	0	0
Austria	46	30
Bahamas	13	6
Bahrain	621	20
Bangladesh	242	200
Barbados	203	264
Belgium	51	55
Bolivia	19	5
Botswana	15	17
Brazil	1,558	184
Brunei	163	147
Bulgaria	1,932	253
Burma	306	93
Cameroon	952	586
Canada	232	153
Chile	301	118
China	763	815
Colombia	197	29
Costa Rica	376	40
Cote d'Ivoire	393	199
Cuba	1,018	59
Cyprus	782	90
Czechoslovakia	138	56
Denmark	1	3
Dominica	0	3
Eastern Caribbean	19	15
Ecuador	144	60
Egypt	3,618	810
El Salvador	11	28
Ethiopia	184	79
Fiji	59	35
Finland	327	201
France	1,390	1,039
Gabon	195	139
Gambia	274	152
German Democratic Republic	329	242
German Federal Republic	132	139
Ghana	1,216	370
Greece	973	323
Grenada	2	0
Guyana	137	42
Holy See	0	0
Honduras	298	21
Hungary	955	100
Iceland	91	48
India	395	262
Indonesia	1,056	210
Iran	785	303
Iraq	1,936	687
Ireland	453	176
Israel	194	196
Italy	1,381	388
Jamaica	671	55
Japan	825	255
Jordan	1,809	405
Kenya	1,415	49
Korea	92	263
Kuwait	468	270
Lebanon	42	30
Lesotho	103	48
Liberia	113	35
Luxembourg	0	2
Malawi	117	12
Malaysia	1,579	700
Malta	234	34
Mauritius	95	55
Mexico	230	185
Mongolia	10	5
Morocco	610	399
Nepal	39	34
Netherlands	17	11
New Zealand	0	0
Nicaragua	61	22
Nigeria	2,476	730
Norway	74	73
Oman	562	387
Pakistan	1,107	401
Panama	152	24
Papua New Guinea	6	9
Paraguay	102	87
Peru	417	218
Philippines	351	123
Poland	1,230	381
Portugal	661	297
Qatar	397	318
Romania	312	98
Saudi Arabia	2,111	1,225
Senegal	231	32
Seychelles	14	12
Sierra Leone	302	158
Singapore	24	12
Somalia	103	92
South Africa	15	19
Soviet Union	1,124	633
Spain	883	455
Sri Lanka	352	88
Sudan	1,281	607
Swaziland	11	15
Sweden	62	67
Switzerland	10	2
Syria	557	195
Tanzania	701	102
Thailand	957	341
Togo	64	63
Tonga	3	1
Trinidad	124	49
Tunisia	285	187
Turkey	1,001	1,114
Uganda	1,100	179
UAE	1,081	484
USA	174	95
Uruguay	313	138
Venezuela	380	264
Vietnam	8	2
PDR Yemen	210	78
Yemen AR	54	40
Yugoslavia	473	74
Zaire	186	84
Zambia	426	193
Zimbabwe	585	166
Commonwealth Secretariat	171	169

Organisation/Country	1985	1986
IMO	16	8
WEU	4	12
COCOA	2	3
United Nations	2	1
EEC	5	3
COFFEE	4	1
INMARSAT	2	1
SUGAR	2	0
Total	59,625	23,237

4th Quarter 1986

	Number
Saudi Arabia	338
Turkey	287
France	257
China	199
Oman	181
Egypt	160
Malaysia	148
Qatar	141
Iraq	139
United Arab Emirates	118
Sudan	116
Cameroon	115
Soviet Union	115
Spain	108
Greece	94
Thailand	87
Morocco	84
Italy	80
Korea	73
Portugal	73
Pakistan	72
Barbados	70
Nigeria	66
Poland	66
Zimbabwe	65
Ghana	64
Jordan	61
Mexico	58
Finland	56
Kuwait	54
Brazil	53
Sierra Leone	53
Japan	52
India	51
Uruguay	51
Iran	50
Kenya	49
Peru	49
Bangladesh	48
The Gambia	48
Israel	47
Cote d'Ivoire	44
German Democratic Republic	43
German Federal Republic	40
Gabon	35
Brunei	34
Tunisia	34
Venezuela	34
Syria	31
Zambia	31
Zaire	29
Algeria	29
Canada	28
Indonesia	28
Chile	24
Norway	24
Tanzania	24
Ireland	23
Uganda	23
Paraguay	22
United States of America	21
Cuba	20
Cyprus	20
Philippines	20
Yugoslavia	19
Bulgaria	18
Burma	16
Fiji	16
Romania	16
Belgium	15
Hungary	15
Iceland	15
Somalia	15
Czechoslovakia	14
Ethiopia	14
Yemen Arab Republic	14
Ecuador	13
Liberia	13
Pdry	13
Bahrain	12
Sweden	11
Jamaica	10
Mauritius	10
Nepal	10
Colombia	9
Guyana	9
Togo	9
Austria	8
Senegal	8
Trinidad	8
Panama	7
South Africa	7
Lebanon	6
Malawi	5
Nicaragua	5
Afghanistan	4
Lesotho	4
Botswana	3
Costa Rica	3
Denmark	3
Seychelles	3
Singapore	3
Sri Lanka	3
Bolivia	2
Dominica	2
Eastern Caribbean	2
Honduras	2
Netherlands	2
Papua New Guinea	2
Bahamas	1
El Salvador	1
Luxembourg	1
Malta	1
Swaziland	1
Switzerland	1
Antigua and Barbuda	0
Australia	0
Grenada	0
Holy See	0
Mongolia	0
New Zealand	0
Tonga	0
Vietnam	0
International Organisations	
Commonwealth Secretariat	50
WEU	5
IMO	1
COCOA	0
United Nations	0
EEC	0
COFFEE	0
INMARSAT	0
SUGAR	0
Total	5,216

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 26-27 April.

Mrs. Chalker: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 26 and 27 April.

The Council held a first discussion of the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community. I stressed that the root of the Community's financial difficulties lay in failure to control agricultural production, and that addressing that problem and improving the control of Community expenditure must therefore be the key elements in the lasting solution which we all want. Further discussion will take place at the May ECOFIN and Foreign Affairs Councils.

The Council agreed on a mandate for the Commission to open negotiations with Hungary on a possible agreement on trade and economic cooperation. Negotiations are expected to begin in the near future.

Turkey's application to join the Community was referred by the Council to the Commission for their opinion, following the normal procedure under article 237 of the treaty of Rome.

The Commission reported to the Council on recent discussions with the Japanese Government on the problem of Japan's trade surplus. The Commission will shortly be making formal proposals for urgent action to prevent diversion of trade following the imposition by the United States of duties on Japanese electronic and other goods. The Council will discuss further action in accordance with an agreed timetable at its May, June and July meetings.

The Council approved guidelines for EC aid to Asia and Latin America. It also discussed relations between the Community and Yugoslavia and between the Community and Israel.

In political co-operation, Ministers agreed a statement by the Twelve on the situation in Sri Lanka, the text of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

I also attended, on 27 April, the first meeting of the Co-operation Council under the EC/Algeria cooperation agreement.

WALES

Hospitals

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of out-patient attendances in National Health Service hospitals in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* in the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:—

Period[1]	Total Number of New Outpatient Attendances	Total Number of All Outpatient Attendances
1970-75	2,596,547	10,127,072
1975-80	2,574,214	10,579,694
1980-85	2,788,833	12,204,851

[1] (six years inclusive).

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales, what were the numbers of inpatients treated in National Health Service hospitals in Wales in *(a)* the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:—

Period[1]	Total Number of In-Patient Discharges and Deaths
1970-75	1,937,204
1975-80	2,067,101
1980-85	2,343,250

[1] (six years inclusive)

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of available beds in National Health hospitals in Wales in *(a)* the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:—

Period[1]	Average Daily Number of Available Beds
1970-75	25,268
1975-80	23,779
1980-85	22,583

[1](six years inclusive)

National Health Service

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales in the years *(a)* 1970 to 1975, *(b)* 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* 1980 to 1985, expressed in actual and in real terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The following table sets out the information requested for each year since 1974-75.

Total Net Expenditure on the National Health Service

£ million

[1]Year	Annual Expenditure	[2]Real Terms
1974-75	202·6	686·5
1975-76	273·8	738·2
1976-77	306·7	730·6
1977-78	346·8	725·3
1978-79	398·0	752·1
1979-80	465·9	753·4
1980-81	599·1	816·7
1981-82	682·9	847·7
1982-83	751·0	869·2
1983-84	797·2	883·3
1984-85	862·0	915·7
1985-86	920·7	920·7

[1] The information requested is not available prior to 1974-75.
[2] Actual expenditure revalued to 1985-86 prices using the GDP deflator.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the recurring revenue allocation to the National Health Service in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* in the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985, expressed in actual and in real terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information available is set out in the following table:

Net Revenue Expenditure on the National Health Service

£ million

	Actual Expenditure	[2]Real Terms
[1]1974-75	187·3	634·7
1975-76	250·7	676·0
1976-77	289·0	688·4
1977-78	326·0	681·8
1978-79	374·8	708·3
1979-80	441·6	714·1
1980-81	567·7	773·9
1981-82	642·1	797·0
1982-83	705·3	816·3
1983-84	747·9	828·7
1984-85	809·8	860·3
1985-86	865·9	865·9

[1] The information requested is not available prior to 1974-75.
[2] Expenditure figures revalued to 1985-86 prices using the GDP deflator.

Renal Dialysis

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total cost of providing the renal dialysis unit at Bangor, Gwynedd;

(2) how much was his Department's contribution to the renal dialysis unit at Bangor.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The capital cost of providing this unit was met by the company providing the service and the information requested is not held by the Department. The Department pays the charge levied by the company in respect of each dialysis session.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total cost of providing the renal dialysis unit at Carmarthen, Dyfed;

(2) how much was his Department's contribution to the renal dialysis unit at Carmarthen.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The capital cost of providing this unit was met by the company providing the service and the

information requested is not held by the Department. The Department pays the charge levied by the company in respect of each dialysis session.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total cost of providing the renal dialysis unit at Swansea, West Glamorgan;

(2) how much was his Department's contribution to the renal dialysis unit at Swansea.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The total capital cost of providing the renal dialysis unit at Morriston hospital, Swansea was £561,000, all of which was provided by the Department.

Medical Genetics Centre, Cardiff

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total cost of providing the medical genetics centre at Cardiff;

(2) what was his Department's contribution to the medical genetics centre at Cardiff.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The total capital cost of providing the medical genetics centre at Cardiff is £1,168,000, of which the Welsh Office contribution is £868,000.

Rates

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to lay the Rate Limitation (Designation of Authorities) (Exemption) (Wales) Order relating to the totals of relevant expenditure included in the Welsh rate support grant reports for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1987 has clarified the definition of total and relevant expenditure and enables me to make these orders. I propose to lay the first order shortly. The second order will be laid as soon as practicable thereafter. No local authority in Wales is subject to rate limitation in either 1986-87 or 1987-88.

Lucas Factory, Ystradgynlais

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will receive a deputation from the Lucas factory at Ystradgynlais in South Wales to discuss the proposed redundancies at the plant; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures he proposes to take to stimulate new employment in the Ystradgynlais area in the light of the redundancies proposed at the Lucas plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No redundancies have been announced at the Lucas Electrical factory at Ystradgynlais. All involved are working actively on possibilities to maintain employment. A meeting would not be appropriate. Mid Wales Development and my own Department are continually working to stimulate new employment in the area. I was particularly pleased to see the recent announcement by Clifford Williams and Son Ltd. of plans to double their work force at Ystradgynlais to 200 by the end of next year.

Radioactivity

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a breakdown of expenditure to date relating to the costs in Wales of the Chernobyl accident in the following categories (i) farmers' compensation schemes, (ii) additional equipment purchased for monitoring purposes, (iii) additional staff time spent on radiation monitoring and administering the compensation scheme for farmers and (iv) additional staff time spent on informing the public on the Chernobyl accident and its effects.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The available information, at 28 April 1987, is as follows:

i. £2·64 million.

ii. Approximately £75,500 for the purchase of live monitoring equipment and for paint used in connection with the mark and release scheme. In addition approximately £240,000 has been spent on purchasing sheep for sampling purposes and in meeting the costs of the laboratory analysis to establish their levels of radiocaesium.

iii and iv. The information is not available in the form required.

Queen's Award

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many companies in Wales received the Queen's award *(a)* between 1975 and 1980 and *(b)* between 1980 and the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Welsh Office records show that the numbers of companies with factories in Wales which received the Queen's awards for exporting or technological achievement were as follows:

	Number
1975-80	22
1980-87	29

This double-counts the four awards in 1980.

YTS

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take the appropriate steps to investigate the financial operation of the YTS scheme administered by the Development Board for Rural Wales; why the scheme is to be transferred to the Mid Wales training unit; and if he will arrange for an independent audit into the scheme covering the period 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April, c. *375*]: Adequate audit arrangements already exist and I know of no reason for further financial investigation of the scheme. Any transfer to a new management would require the approval of the Manpower Services Commission, which has received no request for such approval.

Council housing

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many new council houses were built in the financial year 1978-79 in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Neath, respectively; and what was the corresponding position in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 April]: The numbers of local authority dwellings completed in Wales in 1978-79 and 1986-87, (including completions by new town corporations), were 3,869 and 828 respectively. The corresponding figures for Neath are 137 and 28.

PRIME MINISTER

Unitary Taxation

Mr. Grylls asked the Prime Minister if she raised the subject of unitary taxation at her meeting with the Governor of California on Thursday 9 April; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The matter was discussed. I welcomed the progress which California had made, but said that we hoped the further steps needed to meet our concern would also be taken.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister what steps are taken to ensure that Ministers have sufficient contact with the Data Protection Registrar during the design stage of major Government computer projects which process large volumes of personal data.

The Prime Minister: Under section 38 of the Data Protection Act 1984, each Government Department is treated as separate from any other Government Department. It is accordingly for individual Ministers to decide how much contact they need to make with the Data Protection Registrar at the design stage of major computer projects for their department. The Data Protection Registrar welcomes close contacts with Departments in these matters at an early stage.

Civil Servants

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the total numbers of full and part-time civil servants employed in each year since 1970 up to the most recent date for which figures are available, indicating in percentage terms the proportion that each figure represents of the total working population; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The figures are as in the following table:

Civil Servants in Great Britain

1 January dates	*Full-time*	*[1]Part-time*	*Total Civil Service as a percentage of*	
			[2](i) the employed labour force	*[3](ii) working population*
1970	686,600	28,100	2·9	2·9
1971	690,100	26,200	3·0	2·9
1972	688,100	27,600	3·0	2·9
1973	679,900	25,500	2·9	2·8
1974	680,800	27,100	2·9	2·8
1975	679,500	28,800	2·9	2·8
1976	729,200	31,800	3·1	3·0
1977	730,600	31,100	3·1	3·0
1978	722,900	30,100	3·1	2·9
1979	718,400	29,600	3·0	2·9
1980	693,200	28,800	2·9	2·8
1981	681,400	27,300	2·9	2·7
1982	662,800	25,200	2·9	2·6
1983	641,200	22,700	2·9	2·5
1984	622,000	21,200	2·8	2·4
1985	608,900	21,300	2·6	2·3
1986	584,200	24,700	2·5	2·2
1987	585,700	27,500	2·5	2·2

[1] Part-time staff are shown as whole units and are treated as such in the calculation of the column of percentages. The more usual practice for Civil Service manpower counts and targets is to treat them as half units.

[2] Figures for the employed labour force include employees, the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's Forces but exclude the unemployed. For all years Department of Employment estimates for the previous mid-December dates have been used.

[3] Figures for the working population represent the employed labour force plus the unemployed. Estimates for the previous mid-December dates have been used.

Note:

Machinery of Government changes affect the comparability of figures throughout the period shown. Details are given in the 1986 and earlier editions of Civil Service Statistics, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Sources: Her Majesty's Treasury's Records; Department of Employment.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister what has been the outcome of the examination of statements made by certain persons alleged to have been involved in war crimes following their arrival in the United Kingdom and subsequently when applying for citizenship.

The Prime Minister: Last month, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary invited the Simon Wiesenthal Centre to supply the evidence on which its list of alleged war criminals was based. Until this evidence is available to us, it will not be possible to tell whether it calls into question the truth of the statements to which the right hon. Member refers.

Northern Ireland (Terrorism)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister what policy steps she intends to take to counteract the increasing violence and deaths caused by republican terrorism in Northern Ireland since 1 January; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has already reviewed the present security situation with his advisers,

including the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding and is urgently considering what further measures and resources may be necessary to reinforce the campaign against terrorism in Northern Ireland.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures for the number of people who have had their claims for unemployment benefit suspended since the availability for work tests were introduced in *(a)* South Humberside, *(b)* Lincolnshire and *(c)* each unemployment office in these two areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments, it has always been the practice that, wherever a doubt arises as to whether a benefit claimant is available for work, payments are suspended until the independent statutory adjudicating authorities decide entitlement. Those rules have not been changed in recent years.

Deptford Skillcentre

Mr. Cartright asked the Paymaster General if he will set out the number of applicants waiting for each of the courses offered at the Deptford skillcentre at the most recent convenient date, together with the estimated waiting period in each case.

Mr. Trippier: The waiting period for skillcentre courses can vary depending on the length of the course, which can range from two to 52 weeks, and on whether it recruits as vacancies become available or by block entry, for example to meet particular examination dates set by external bodies. The latest available information for courses running at Deptford skillcentre in 1987-88 is as follows:

Class	*Number on waiting list at 24 April*	*Estimated waiting period (months)*
Bricklaying	28	8
Carpentry	60	12
Commercial Technology	36	3
Commercial Technology (Intermediate)	7	2
Group Electronics	9	5
Kitchen Fitting	15	5
Office Machinery	20	5
Painting and Decorating	50	12
Plastering	43	5
Plumbing	4	[1]
Screen Process Printing	26	7
Work Related Skills (Commercial)	47	4
Work Related Skills (Manual)	16	4

[1] This course requires a block entry of 12 trainees, so the waiting period cannot be estimated.

In addition to these, Deptford Skillcentre has been accepted as a managing agent for the new job training scheme, for which it expects an annual throughput of 1,200 trainees. Recruitment for the new scheme has just begun.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of employees covered by each column in tables 18.7 to 18.11 of the *Monthly Digest of Statistics*.

Mr. Lee: For industries within manufacturing industry at September 1986, the available information on the number of manual employees corresponding to tables 18.7 to 18.9 of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics" is shown in Table 1.10 of *Employment Gazette*, December 1986, a copy of which is in the Library.

Employment estimates for the nearest comparable industry groupings to those shown for the average earnings index in tables 18.10 and 18.11 of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics", at December 1986, are as follows:

Employees in Employment in Great Britain December 1986

Division, Class or Group of SIC (80)	*Number of employees in employment (thousands)*
0-9	21,270
2-4	5,152
1-4	5,666
01-03	313
11-14	216
15-17	298
21-24	434
25-26	343
32	705
33-34	630
35	249
36	274
31, 37	394
41-42	551
43	251
44-45	331
46	217
47	476
48-49	296
50	1007
61-65, 67	3,301
66	1,018
71-72, 75-77, 79	1,313
81-82, 83, 84	2,046
91, 921	1,699
93,95	2,941
97-98	656

Some of these estimates are subject to considerable estimation error due to the small number of employees in the industries concerned.

Unemployed Resource Centres

Mr. McKelvey asked the Paymaster General if he will place copies of the Manpower Services Commission internal memorandum concerning the withdrawal of funds from the unemployed resource centres in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission has no internal memorandum on the withdrawal of funding from centres for the unemployed. All applications for the renewal of community programme projects, including those from centres for the unemployed, must meet normal community programme criteria.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Mates asked the Paymaster General if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 18 February at column 611.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his answer of 10 April, *Official Report*, column *434*, when he expects to be able to provide the relevant information on the job training scheme; and if he will consider publishing it in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Manpower Services Commission expects its area offices to have signed contracts with all new job training scheme managing agents by the end of May. Full details should be available at its head office by mid-June.

I will write to the hon. Member as soon as these details are available and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textile and Clothing Industries

15. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the Trades Union Congress textile committee to discuss the future of the textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to a similar question of his on 10 December last. I have no plans at present to meet the Trades Union Congress textile committee.

Schools (Computers)

18. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the number of computers paid for by his Department in schools.

Mr. Butcher: Yes, Sir. My Department has made excellent progress towards the Government's objective of introducing and encouraging the use of computers in schools.

Since 1981, my Department's help towards the purchase of computers and related equipment by schools has included: Three Microcomputer in Schools schemes (June 1981-December 1984) whereby a total of £15·1 million was spent on providing 6,514 secondary schools and 27,407 primary schools with a half-price micro system plus monitor; in March of this year, a grant of £3·5 million allocated to local education authorities and the independent sector, which resulted in the purchase of over 2,000 computers in addition to other peripheral IT equipment. Assistance to enhance the capabilities of existing computers has included: the Support for Educational Software scheme with £3·5 million funding over three years (1985-86 to 1987-88) which encourages the purchase of additional software; and in March 1986 the Modems in Schools scheme, under which every middle and secondary school received a free modem to give them access to national databases.

Airbus

38. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Government support for Airbus.

Mr. Pattie: Discussions with British Aerospace about its combined application for launch aid in respect of the Airbus A330 and A340 projects are continuing. We aim to reach a decision as soon as possible and an announcement to the House will be made thereafter.

Insider Dealing

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken on information so far received from the inspectors appointed by him to inquire into insider dealing at the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Howard: I have received no information from the inspectors which calls for action on my part.

Steel Industry

22. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence is available to him that other steel producers in the European Economic Community are receiving state subsidies for steel production.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None. Almost all forms of state aid for steel have been banned since 1 January 1986 by unanimous decision of the Council of Ministers, and with my encouragement the Commission has been keeping a vigilant watch since then.

Regional Aid

23. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to review the current criteria for regional aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have no such plans.

Japan

24. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he has achieved in securing wider access for British exports to the Japanese market.

Mr. Channon: In the year ending February 1987, the United Kingdom visible trade deficit with Japan was £3.8 billion. Some progress has been made. I am glad to say that in 1986 United Kingdom visible exports to Japan increased by 18 per cent. to £1.2 billion.

30. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value, for the most recent 12 months, of motor car exports to Japan; and what is the comparable figure for imports from that country.

Mr. Butcher: Motor car exports to Japan for the 12 months ending February this year amounted to £24 million; for the same period imports were £817 million.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will introduce forthwith an increase of 40 per cent. in the duty of Japanese leather imports to the United Kingdom;

(2) what action he intends to take in relation to the situation regarding Japanese leather exports to the United Kingdom being subject to duties not exceeding 7 per cent. compared with a tariff of 60 per cent. placed on almost all leather exports to Japan.

Mr. Alan Clark: Tariffs are a matter for the Community as a whole. The Government continue to seek better market access abroad for British exports rather than to reduce imports. With our Community partners we have

made clear to the Japanese Government our concern about excessive protection by Japan of its leather industry. We look to Japan to make early and substantial improvements in existing arrangements, to the benefit of British and other Community exporters.

Manufactured Goods

25. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what factors he attributes the decline in the United Kingdom's share of manufactured exports and the trend of the United Kingdom's export performance in comparison with other European manufacturing nations.

Mr. Pattie: Our share of world exports of manufactured goods reflects a variety of factors including both price and non-price competitiveness and the geographical and commodity composition of our exports. United Kingdom exports of manufactures were again at record levels last year since 1981 the United Kingdom volume share of main manufacturing countries' exports of manufactures has been maintained, halting years of decline.

33. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the trade deficit in manufactured goods.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend meets the CBI regularly at the National Economic Development Council and on other occasions. At present he has no plans for a special meeting on this subject.

50. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate the nature and size of the current deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the first two months of 1987, there was a deficit in trade in manufactures of £0·5 billion.

Children's Nightwear

26. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value of imported children's nightwear; how many tests for flammability were carried out on such garments in the last year for which statistics are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The total value of imported nightwear in 1986 was £37·3 million. Children's nightwear is not separately identified in the overseas trade statistics.

The 1967 regulations, which remained in force until 28 February 1987, required only children's nightdresses to pass a fammability test. No information is available on the number of tests carried out by suppliers for assessing the flammability of the material or by local authority trading standards departments for enforcing the regulations.

Cars (Local Content)

27. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the level of local content and United Kingdom sourcing by multinational car manufacturers based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: There is clear evidence of welcome improvements, both actual and planned, in the levels of local content and local sourcing achieved by the multinational car producers, but the Government always want to see them do more.

United States of America

28. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the balance of trade with the United States of America was in 1986.

Mr. Butcher: In 1986, our exports to the United States were worth £10 billion, compared with imports of £8 billion. There was thus a crude balance in our favour of some £2 billion.

Research and Development

29. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the National Economic and Development Council to discuss research and development funding.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend attended the meeting of the National Economic Development Council on 1 April at which industrial innovation, including funding for research and development, was discussed.

I expect that the council will discuss this subject at future meetings in view of its importance for the improvement of industrial competitiveness.

Manufacturing Technology

31. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received with regard to advanced manufacturing technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My Department receives advice on a continuing basis from the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee, which also has responsibilities towards the Science and Engineering Research Council. The committee has recently provided advice on a number of topics. These included the IT86 report on information technology and the Department's priorities for expenditure on science and technology in the field of manufacturing. The Department's officials also have a continuing dialogue on advance manufacturing technology with a wide range of organisations, including institutions and industrial companies.

Merchant Shipbuilding

32. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the prospects for the merchant shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The market for merchant shipbuildings remains highly competitive but the success of British Shipbuilders in China, which will be most welcome to the hon. Member's constituents, shows that we mean what we say about giving all the support we can in the battle for new orders.

National Quality Campaign

34. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of the national quality campaign.

Mr. Butcher: Since its launch in April in 1983, the campaign has reached over 50,000 firms. There are now

around 9,000 entries in the latest edition of the "Register of Quality Assessed United Kingdom Companies". It is clear that more and more firms are adopting a companywide approach to quality which is vital to their competitiveness. The progress must be maintained, however, and the commitment of all sectors of industry and commerce to quality in the goods and services they provide is essential. The campaign is being extended, for example, on a regional basis and a quality activity programme is planned for the slough area later in the year.

European Technical and Research Collaboration

35. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on European technical and research collaboration.

Mr. Pattie: I believe that European technical and research collaboration can play an important role in improving the technological base and competitive position of United Kingdom industry.

My Department therefore supports specific collaborative activities where there is clear added value to United Kingdom industry in doing so. This is demonstrated by the importance we attach to, for example, the European Space Agency, ESPRIT and EUREKA.

Manufacturing Investment

36. **Mr. Blair** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the fall in the real value of manufacturing investment in the north since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: When the world recession hit a sector suffering from poor competitiveness, resulting from years of high inflation, low productivity growth and poor rates of return on investment, there was a sharp fall in manufacturing investment, which continued up to 1982. Since that date, with industry becoming more competitive and better adapted to the demands of a modern economy, investment in the north has steadily increased. Excluding leased assets, for which no regional data are available, manufacturing investment in the north fell from £613 million in 1979 to £256 million in 1982 and rose to £403 million in 1985 at 1979 prices.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

37. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress in the current general agreement on tariffs and trade round.

Mr. Butcher: The Uruguay round is scheduled to take four years from its launch last September. The various negotiating groups have completed their initial series of meetings and further work will be done during 1987 on defining problems and proposing solutions to them. Negotiations on detailed proposals will begin in 1988.

Manufacturing Industry

21. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans the Government have to increase investment in manufacturing industry this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Investment decisions are for industry. The best stimulants are confidence in the future and the prospects of good profits. Our sound economic policies, which have brought sustained growth in the economy, improved profitability and low inflation, are the best guarantees of favourable conditions for further investment.

39. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Trades Union Congress to discuss investment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend meets the TUC regularly at the National Economic Development Council, where matters relevant to improving industrial performance are discussed. I have no plans for a separate meeting on the subject, but I met the steel committee representatives on Thursday 26 February.

40. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and how this compares with the figure for the same month 13 years ago.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The hon. Member will appreciate that monthly data can be erratic. However, since the trough of the recession in 1981, manufacturing output has increased by over 15 per cent. to reach a level of 107·6 in February 1987, based on 1980 equal to 100. This was about 1½ per cent. lower than the level of output in February 1974.

41. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current level of investment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Investment in manufacturing industry was nearly 20 per cent. higher in 1986 than in 1983. The underlying determinants of manufacturing investment—sustained growth in the economy, improved profitability and a low rate of inflation—are very favourable, and forecasters expect a further significant increase in manufacturing investment in 1987.

Protectionism

42. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the effects on the United Kingdom economy of trade protectionism.

Mr. Alan Clark: Protectionism is a short-range and essentially short-term response to economic and international trade developments and it undermines the open world trade system created by GATT rules. It must be distinguished from protection, which can be legitimate and operated fairly. Governments have social, economic and political priorities which require the protection of some types of economic activity, and this is recognised by GATT. Protectionism raises prices, reduces choice and encourages an inefficient allocation of resources. Were it to proliferate, it could weaken world trade and damage prospects for world economic growth, including the growth of the United Kingdom economy.

Share Dealing

43. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions have been undertaken since 1979 under part VI of the Companies Act for the organisation of a concert party.

53. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions have been undertaken since 1979 under part VI of the Companies Act for the organisation of a concert party.

Mr. Howard: None.

USSR

44. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the latest prospects for Anglo-Soviet trade.

Mr. Butcher: During her visit to Moscow, the Prime Minister agreed with Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov to work together to achieve by 1990 a volume of 2·5 billion roubles in our bilateral trade, which would mean a 40 per cent. increase in rouble terms. A good start has been made towards this target, with contracts and letters of intent worth nearly £400 million signed during or since the visit. Officials of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Trade are in London this week for discussions about the development of our trade. Despite the low oil price, which limits the Soviet Union's purchasing power, I believe there is now a good prospect of considerable growth in two-way trade over the next few years.

Steel Industry

45. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he is taking to ensure that any renewal of the quota system for the steel industry within the European Economic Community will be followed by the provision of the same level of national and official support for the industry in the United Kingdom as in the other member states.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Whether or not the production quota system is renewed, it is essential that the Commission vigorously enforces the strict code banning almost all state aids for the steel industry which was introduced on 1 January 1986 with the unanimous support of the Council of Ministers. The British steel industry does of course have my full support.

Exports

46. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value of total exports won with the assistance of aid and trade provision since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: Since 1 January 1979, orders for £2·1 billion-worth of United Kingdom exports have been won with the assistance of £460 million under the aid and trade provision.

Industrial Prospects

47. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the president of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the prospects for British industry.

Mr. Channon: I met the president of the Confederation of British Industry at a meeting of the National Economic Development Council on 1 April, where a number of matters related to the prospects for British industry were discussed.

Guinness plc

48. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations from the inspectors appointed by him to inquire into the affairs of Guinness requesting more resources.

52. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations from the inspectors appointed by him to inquire into the affairs of Guinness requesting more resources.

Mr. Howard: No. In accordance with usual practice in company investigations, the inspectors are using support staff from the accountant inspector's firm. There are no contraints on resources in the investigation, either in terms of money or manpower.

Efficiency and Productivity

49. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's present position in the efficiency and productivity leagues of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Butcher: The United Kingdom's productivity growth in manufacturing industry has been the fastest of all major OECD countries since 1979 and the prospects for further growth are excellent. This compares with the period 1973 to 1979 when the United Kingdom was at the bottom of the productivity growth league.

Telecommunications Equipment

51. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he has made in pursuit of collaborative and marketing arrangements for British telecommunications equipment manufacturers.

Mr. Pattie: The initiatives for such commercial arrangements must lie with companies. The role for Government is in support of their efforts. To this end my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has met many of his European counterparts. I am encouraged by the number of companies successfully developing arrangements of this kind.

South Korea (Scotch Whisky)

54. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he proposes to take to secure the removal of trade barriers against the sale of bottled-in-Scotland Scotch whisky throughout South Korea.

Mr. Butcher: We will continue to press the Korean Government, bilaterally and with our European partners, for the early removal of restrictions on imports of bottled-in-Scotland Scotch whisky.

Inward Investment

19. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he takes to ensure that policies to encourage inward investment are carried out in co-ordination with the policies on promoting United Kingdom industries at home and abroad.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Successive Governments have encouraged inward investment for the benefits it brings to

the economy. Applications for selective assistance for inward investment projects are assessed against the same criteria as domestic projects. One important factor in this assessment is the impact which the new investment will have on firms already established in the same sector.

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who many jobs were created by inward investment into the United Kingdom in 1986.

Mr. Butcher: The Invest in Britain Bureau recorded 322 investment decisions taken by overseas companies during 1986. From the information provided by the companies themselves, these decisions are expected to create more than 16,500 new jobs and safeguard over 9,500 others. Further information is available from the Invest in Britain Bureau's annual report, copies of which I will place in the Library of the House.

SCOTLAND

Western Infirmary, Glasgow (Renal Unit)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the representations he has received from the western district Greater Glasgow health board local health council over the renal unit at the Western infirmary, Glasgow, about which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill wrote to him on 31 March.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations from the greater Glasgow west local health council on this matter. The local health council has made a submission to a panel of inquiry set by the greater Glasgow health board and, as my noble Friend the Minister of State explained in his reply of 23 April to the hon. Member's letter, it would not be appropriate for Ministers to comment on that submission.

Radioactivity

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish a further bulletin with the results of the official monitoring for environmental radioactivity in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Scottish Development Department statistical bulletin Number 1(e) 1987 ("Environmental Monitoring for Radioactivity in Scotland: 1981-1985") was published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

Shotgun Certificates

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now undertake a review of the present requirements for applications for new shotgun certificates.

Mr. Lang: No.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the statistics for each police authority in Scotland for each year since 1979 showing the number of assaults reported when the victim of the crime was over retirement age in absolute numbers and expressed as per thousand head of population in the police authority area, together with the percentage clear-up rate of these crimes in each area.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available.

Agency Nursing

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to furnish information, similar to that available to the Department of Health and Social Security in England and Wales, concerning the total expenditures by each health board on agency nursing to fill staff shortages.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of agency nurses employed by the Health Service in Scotland are very small. Over the quarter to 30 September 1986, the total hours worked by agency nurses equated to 145 whole-time equivalent staff, this being about 0·4 per cent. of total qualified nursing staff. In view of these numbers, the considerable effort to collect the expenditure information requested cannot be justified.

Forestry

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many forestry grant scheme applications are currently being considered which affect land within Caithness and Sutherland; and if he will list them and the hectarage involved.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission is currently considering 28 such applications, as follows:

Name of Property	*Area (Hectares)*
Forestry Grant Scheme	
Cnoc Moine Na Caillin	284·4
Braelangwell	629·7
Limekiln and Whitewell	1,431·5
Torrish	220·1
North Burn	99·1
Yellow Moss	17·1
Sciberscross	940·6
Skitten	0·9
Eriboll	804·2
Langwell Wood	91·5
Navidale	65·0
Cnoc Na Main	149·8
Ben Bhraggie	42·0
Glencavlie	30·1
Loubcroy	202·0
Strathy East	282·0
Kirkton Farm (Eglaise Muir)	194·4
Cnoc Bacach	28·0
Achany	199·4
Broadleaved Woodland Grant Scheme	
Baddhu Birchwoods	23·0
Craggans Woods	25·7
Loch Dhu	11·5
Airdens-Innish	0·8
Migdale Mill Farm	1·6
Strathmore Lodge Woods	0·7
Forss House	1·3
Ackergill Woods	1·3
Cnoc Bacach	9·8

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total area of land which was referred to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland by the Forestry Commission under forestry grant consultation procedures during the years ended 31 March 1986 and 31 March 1987; and if he will list in the *Official Report* by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland area offices, the area of land in relation to which the

Department advised it was *(a)* acceptable to award forestry grant and *(b)* inappropriate to offer grant on agricultural grounds.

Mr. John MacKay: During the period 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987, a total of 49,895 hectares of land was referred to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland by the Forestry Commission under the procedures for consultation on forestry grant scheme applications. The detailed information requested is as follows:

Area Ofice	*Area Referred (in hectares)*	*Area Cleared (in hectares)*	*Area Not Cleared (in hectares)*
Aberdeen	675	593	82
Ayr	9,027	8,153	874
Galashiels	2,767	1,921	846
Dumfries	7,010	6,085	925
Dundee	678	602	76
Edinburgh	768	669	99
Glasgow	6,020	5,708	312
Keith	993	993	—
Kirkwall	—	—	—
Inverness	4,496	4,278	218
Oban	3,620	3,581	39
Perth	2,923	2,490	433
Portree	628	628	—
Stirling	4,245	2,221	2,024
Thurso	6,045	5,774	271
Total	49,895	43,676	6,219

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total areas of land which the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland advised the Forestry Commission were acceptable for award of forestry grant aid in each of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland area offices in each of the LCA classes 4, 5 and 6 in the year commencing 1 April 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct the Foresty Commission *(a)* formally to acknowledge and respond to all comments or objections from statutory consultees over applications for forestry grant aid, and *(b)* inform statutory consultees of the outcome of all applications it has commented upon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: In order to keep down administrative costs, it is the Forestry Commission's normal practice only to acknowledge or respond to comments or objections from statutory authorities consulted over forestry grant applications when there are issues which need to be resolved in discussion with the authorities concerned. The commission always informs authorities of the outcome of the application in such circumstances, as it does in other cases if requested to do so. I do not see any need to instruct the commission to change this fair and reasonable procedure.

Parole Policy

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now completed his consideration of the implications for Scotland of the European Court of Human Rights' judgment in the case of Robert Weekes and the English High Court judgment in the case of Brian Handscomb; and what changes in parole policy he now intends to implement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Divisional Court judgment in the case of Handscomb and others was critical of certain aspects of the arrangements in England and Wales for setting the date of the first formal review by the parole board machinery for those cases in which a life senntence is not mandatory. The arrangements which operate in Scotland are rather different and do not appear to be open to the same criticism. I shall, however, consider what implications the judgment may have for our system, in the light of the conclusions on which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has announced that he will make a statement shortly.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has also announced today his decision in the case of Mr. Robert Malcolm Weekes, who was also subject to a discretionary life sentence. I shall be considering further with my right hon. Friend the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in this case for our domestic law, and shall review Scottish practice in the light of this judgment, which does not refer to life sentence prisoners in general.

Health Service (Contracts)

Mr. Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of all contracts which have been put out to public tender since 1983 in the Health Service, together with any resulting savings.

Mr. John MacKay: Details provided by Scottish health boards and the Common Service Agency of contracts which have been put out to public tender since 1983 to end 1986 and estimates of resulting savings where these could be calculated are given in the table below:

Health Board/CSA	*Total number of contracts let*	*Savings over previous costs £000's*
Ayrshire and Arran	8	61
Borders	1	41
Fife	2	19
Forth Valley	2	8
Lanarkshire	2	29
Tayside	8	283
CSA	5	18
Scotland Total	28	459

Speed Limits

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in what circumstances he will prevent a local transport authority from imposing a speed limit when the proposal meets his own environmental and accident criteria.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend never refuses consent for a speed limit if he is satisfied that the relevant criteria are fully met.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what weight he attaches to the recommendations of the relevant chief constable that a speed limit should be imposed upon a particular stretch of road.

Mr. Ancram: The chief constable's view is one of several factors which are taken into account when determining whether consent should be given to the imposition of a speed limit.

Prisons

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether reports have been received from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland on Barlinnie prison, Barlinnie special unit and social work units in Scottish prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have received reports by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland on his inspections of Barlinnie prison, Barlinnie special unit and social work units in Scottish prisons. I have today placed copies of the reports in the Library, together with my responses, and I am sending a copy to the Member in whose constituency the establishments are located; to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the Chairman of the Scottish All-Party Penal Affairs Group and to other interested bodies. Copies may also be purchased from my Department.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what research proposals his Department has received for studies into the relationship between drug abuse and AIDS and HIV infection in Edinburgh and Lothian region, and into the transmission of HIV infection to babies; and what response his Department has made to those proposals to date.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Home and Health Department has received, and is at present funding, five research projects costing in total £160,000 relevant to the relationship between drug abuse and AIDS and HIV infection. The Department has received one application relating to the transmission of HIV infection to babies for which funding was not recommended by the Chief Scientist's biomedical research committee on the grounds of scientific merit.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *383*]: In June 1986 the staff of my Department were issued with comprehensive guidance on AIDS which was based on material provided to all departments by the Management and Personnel Office and the Civil Service Occupational Health Service. Further guidance, based on the Department of Employment-Health and Safety Executive booklet "AIDS and Employment", is currently being prepared for issue to staff.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *383*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *383*]: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Tied Cottages

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications by landlords for repossession under the terms of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976, of an agricultural tied cottage there have been since the Act came into force; and how many alleged offences under section 28(11) and 28(14) of that Act there have been, together with details of the number of prosecutions subsequently brought, and the average fine imposed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Dialysis Treatment

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if there are any plans for the inmate of Wandsworth prison now receiving dialysis treatment to be given a kidney transplant;

(2) for how long the present private dialysis treatment now being given to an inmate of Wandsworth prison is planned to last;

(3) how many prison officers escort the inmate from Wandsworth prison for dialysis treatment; how many hours are involved in this work per week; and what is the total cost;

(4) who gave permission for an inmate at Wandsworth prison to receive private dialysis treatment; what is the weekly cost of this treatment; and who is responsible for paying it.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Association of Chief Police Officers (Legislative Guidelines)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines have been issued by the Association of Chief Police Officers on the Public Order Act and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; and if he will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am not aware of any guidelines issued on these Acts by the Association of Chief Police Officers, although the association has produced forms for use in connection with procedures required by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Guidance on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 has been issued by the Home Office in circulars 88/1985 (which has the ACPO forms as an appendix) and circular 89/1985; and on the Public Order Act 1986 in circulars 77/1986 and 11/1987. Copies are in the Library.

Police Officers (Lost Hours)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate for each of the last

10 years the numbers of police hours lost by officers *(a)* attending criminal courts on days when the cases did not call in court, *(b)* when the accused person changed his or her plea or *(c)* when the prosecution deserted the case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I regret that the information from which any such estimates might be made is not available.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about Her Majesty's Government's crime prevention initiatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We receive a steady flow of correspondence about our crime prevention initiatives, which demonstrates a high level of public interest. My hon. Friend's letter of 13 April is one example. That letter proposed the early promulgation of results of our local crime prevention project in Bolton and that the lessons learnt should be put into practice promptly. I welcome my hon. Friend's continued support for this project and shall write to him shortly.

Parole

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has now completed his consideration of the judgments of the High Court in the case of Brian Handscomb and the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Robert Weekes; and what changes in parole policy he now intends to implement.

Mr. Hurd: The Divisional court judgment in the case of Handscomb and others, delivered on 2 March, upheld the lawfulness of the policy for the release of life sentence prisoners announced in reply to a question by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) on 30 November 1983. Indeed, it described that policy as unassailable. The judgment was, however, critical of certain aspects of the application of that policy in relation to the setting of the date of the first formal review by the Parole Board machinery of those cases in which a life sentence is imposed at the discretion of the trial judge, that is, for offences other than murder (for which the life sentence is mandatory). I am discussing with the Lord Chief Justice the arrangements necessary to take account of the judgment and I shall make a full statement shortly. The case of one of the applicants, Mr. Brian Handscomb, is now being reviewed by the Parole Board machinery in accordance with the relief offered to him by the Divisional court.

Robert Malcolm Weekes was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1966, at the age of 17, having pleaded guilty to a number of offences, including armed robbery. This offence was committed in a pet shop, using a starting pistol loaded with blank cartridges. He stole the equivalent of 35p, which he dropped as he left. The trial judge said that he regarded Mr. Weekes as a very dangerous young man and explained that he regarded a wholly indeterminate sentence as appropriate so that the Secretary of State could release him when he had become responsible. The sentence was upheld by the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Weekes was released from prison in March 1976 and recalled in June 1977, having behaved in such a way as to suggest that he represented a potential danger to others and to himself. He was released again in October 1982 and further detained in April 1985, because he had been out of touch with the probation officer supervising him under the terms of his life licence. He was released in September 1985.

Mr. Weekes' application to the European Commission of Human Rights related to his recall to prison in 1977 and his continued detention. He alleged a breach of article 5, paragraph 1, of the European convention on human rights, which provides that no one shall be deprived of his liberty save in prescribed circumstances, such as lawful detention after conviction by a competent court, and in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law. He also alleged a breach of article 5, paragraph 4, which provides that everyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings by which the lawfulness of his detention shall be decided speedily by a court and his release ordered if the detention is not lawful. The Commission, having reported on the case in December 1984, referred it to the European Court of Human Rights. The court delivered judgment on 2 March and found that there had been no breach of article 5, paragraph 1, and that Mr. Weekes' detention had been lawful. However, the court found that there had been a breach of article 5, paragraph 4, in the circumstances of Mr. Weekes' case.

The court's judgment accepts that, for the purposes of article 5, paragraphs 1 and 4 of the convention, where a life sentence is imposed because of the gravity of the offence, supervision of the lawfulness of detention, including any subsequent decision to recall the prisoner following release on licence, is incorporated at the outset in the original trial and appeal. On the other hand, it suggests that different considerations may apply where it is apparent that a life sentence has been passed, not so much as punishment, but primarily so that the indeterminate sentence enables the offender's progress to be monitored so that he can be released when it is safe to do so. This distinction is not recognised in our law, and the court itself observed that it may be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle elements underlying a particular sentence and to determine which of those elements was accorded more importance by the sentencing judge.

However, the court found that

"the clearly stated purpose for which Mr Weekes' sentence was imposed, taken together with the particular facts pertaining to the offence for which he was convicted . . . places the sentence in a special category";

one in which the lawfulness both of the continuing detention and the recall of the prisoner following release on licence must be subject to review by a body with the powers of a court. The court found that the current review procedures of the Parole Board did not fulfil the necessary requirements of the convention in that respect.

I agree with the court's view that the circumstances of the offence of which Mr. Weekes was convicted make his a highly exceptional case. We have no domestic review procedure which fulfils what the court decided were the requirements of article 5, paragraph 4, in his case. Moreover, I am satisfied that there is no evidence that Mr. Weekes now represents a danger to the public such as was the concern of the trial judge over 20 years ago. In these quite exceptional circumstances I have decided that it would be right to recommend Her Majesty to remit the

remainder of Mr. Weekes' life sentence. This will have the effect that he will no longer be liable to supervision or recall to custody.

We shall consider the implications of the relevant provisions of the convention for domestic law and practice in the light of this judgment, which does not, however, apply to life sentence prisoners in general. The "Special Category" into which the European Court concluded that the case of Mr. Weekes fell is in any view strictly limited.

Waltham Forest (Meeting)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner on the meeting held outside Waltham Forest town hall on the evening of 9 April, in particular as to whether any charges have been brought in relation to any of the speeches on the grounds that they allegedly transgressed the law on racial abuse, constituted incitement to racial harassment or incitement to violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that this was a peaceful meeting attended by over 5,000 people and that no one present has been charged.

Police Station, Oakham

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has now received the letter dated 1 April from Mr. Robert Angrave, chairman of the Leicestershire police committee, regarding the provision of a new police station in Oakham; and what response he intends to make to it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In reply to his letter of 1 April, we informed the chairman of the Leicestershire police committee that, as I told my hon. Friend on 5 March, at column 1021, we hope to be able to give approval next year for work on the new Oakham police station to start in 1991-92.

Metropolitan Police (First Aid)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are being made for future first aid training for police officers within the Metropolitan police area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that all officers obtain the St. John Ambulance certificate during their initial training. Uniformed sergeants and constables then have a two-day course every three years until they have completed 22 years service. Officers working on some specialist duties receive additional training. There are no plans at present to extend this, but first-aid training is kept constantly under review.

Waltham Forest (Petrol Bomb Attack)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the petrol bomb attack on 10 April on the home of the leader of Waltham Forest council, dealing, inter alia, with the question whether there was any connection between this event and the demonstration held on the previous evening outside Waltham Forest town hall.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner that the police investigation has not revealed any such connection. The person or persons responsible for this attack have not so far been traced.

Women's Rights

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the ministerial group on women's issues has completed its review of the Government's response to the forward looking strategies for the advancement of women drawn up at the Nairobi conference which marked the end of the United Nations decade for women.

Mr. Waddington: The ministerial group has completed its review and I am placing copies of the group's report in the Library.

During the course of the review we looked at all areas of policy covered by the forward looking strategies, and the report brings together a great deal of information which will be helpful to women and their representatives organisations. We shall be making copies of the report widely available.

The report demonstrates that our policies fully comply with the spirit of the forward looking strategies, and indicates the strength of our commitment to equality of opportunity between men and women. We shall maintain our commitment and continue to develop our policies in the light of the goals laid down in the forward looking strategies.

ENVIRONMENT

Community Charge

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the likely level of the community charge in north-west England.

Dr. Boyson: Since we published illustrative community charge figures on 1 April we have received three representations about the likely level of the community charge in north-west England.

Rate Capping (Ealing)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce whether Ealing council is to be rate-capped in 1988.

Dr. Boyson: In line with the usual timetable, my right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement about selective rate limitation for 1988-89 in July.

Sewers

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the number of sewer collapses in the area covered by each water authority since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The main sources of information on sewer collapses and other failures since 1979 are: a series of reports produced by the water research centre covering the period 1981-1985; and summary information in water authorities' corporation plans. The WRC survey indicated

that the total number of failures requiring excavation in England and Wales is running at between 4,000 and 8,000 per year and that over half of these were collapses.

Figures of significant sewer failures for 1985-86, as given in plans, are as follows:

	Numbers
Anglian	290
North West	1,140
Northumbrian	230
Severn Trent	420
South West	220
Southern	510
Thames	650
Wessex	280
Yorkshire	1,340

Figures for earlier years were provided in an answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) on 15 January 1986, but because of varying and improving reporting methods, caution is at present needed in making any comparisons between authorities or over time.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to review his policy on the extension of enterprise zones.

Mr. John Patten: We expect soon to receive a report from consultants commissioned to conduct a survey on the enterprise zone experiment. We will consider whether to review our policy in the light of that respect.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities which have requested consideration for *(a)* a new enterprise zone and *(b)* an extension to an existing enterprise zone.

Mr. John Patten: Since the announcement of the choice of present zone authorities, the following have been received from English local authorities:

(a) Requests to extend existing enterprise zones
- Burnley borough council
- Hartlepool
- Middlesbrough borough council
- Rossendale borough council
- Rotherham metropolitan borough council
- Wellingborough council
- Wrekin council

(b) Request for new enterprise zones
- Camborne town council
- Canterbury city council
- Dover district council
- Kettering borough council
- Shepway district council
- Thanet district council

"Paying for Local Government"

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received on the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Dr. Boyson: One thousand, two hundred and seventeen responses were received before the consultation period ended on 31 October 1986. A summary of responses has been placed in the Library. We continue to receive representations about our detailed proposals.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Spencer Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what criteria he selects areas for the creation of urban development corporations.

Mr. John Patten: The criteria adopted have been the level of unemployment, the amount of derelict-vacant land and the extent to which public sector funds will lever private sector investment to regenerate the area.

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to create any urban development corporations in the Yorkshire and Humberside region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No, but the suggestion is firmly lodged with me.

Acid Rain

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the latest figures from Warren Spring laboratory on acidic deposition in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. An analysis of measurements made in the period 1981-1985 will shortly be published in the second report from the review group on acid rain. Results for 1986 from the Department's national acid rain network are now being analysed by Warren Spring laboratory and will be published later this year.

Sulphur Emissions

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 17 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *1192*, about sulphur emissions, what will be the total cost of reducing sulphur emissions to 70 per cent. of their 1980 level; how this will be done; what other harmful chemicals are present in emissions from power stations; and what measures are being considered, and at what cost, to remove these chemicals.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost will depend critically on the future level of energy demand. To help ensure that we meet this goal, despite an increase in energy consumption associated with higher economic growth, we have authorised the CEGB to retrofit three power stations with flue gas desulphurisation equipment, at an estimated capital cost of £780 million. All new coal-fired power stations will be fitted with such equipment, or whatever better technology is available, to the requirements of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. In the meantime, the CEGB and British Coal continue to research other cleaner methods of burning coal, including the development of pressurised fluidised bed combustion.

Other substances emitted to air in significant quantities from power stations include nitrogen oxides, hydrogen chloride and particulates. Particulate emissions have for many years been subject to stringent controls achieved, in the case of coal-fired plant, through the use of electrostatic precipitators. HMIP is currently consulting the industry on future standards for acid gas and particulate emissions from large burners and furnaces. The results of full-scale trials of low NOx burners now taking place at two existing power stations, Fiddlers Ferry and Eggborough, are also being evaluated by the CEGB.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are currently being undertaken to reduce the discharge to the sea of radioactive waste from Sellafield; when these measures will be completed; and what will be the total cost involved.

Mr. Waldegrave: British Nuclear Fuels plc has a site development programme for the further reduction of the radioactive content of liquid discharges from Sellafield by the early 1990s.

This programme includes additional treatment of effluent streams and the construction of the enhanced actinide removal plant. During the last six years about £200 million has been spent on installations such as the site ion exchange extraction plant and the salt evaporator designed to reduce the radioactive content of discharges. BNFL will spend a further £500 million during the next six years.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why, further to his answer of 6 April, *Official Report*, column *29*, he does not consider it appropriate to release details of sites considered for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: It would cause unnecessary anxiety in the communities concerned.

Southern Water Authority

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received responses from the Southern water authority and the six water companies concerned, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on water supply in the Southern water authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Commission's report has been studied carefully by Southern Water and the six water companies. The MMC, while giving a clean bill of health of the quality of service provided, and concluding that Southern Water

is on the whole effectively managed and compares well with the general run of public sector bodies",

drew attention to a number of areas where management could be improved, particularly by the companies. Southern and the six companies broadly accept these overall conclusions although they show rather greater enthusiasm for some of the MMC's individual recommendations than others.

I note that Southern Water has now completed its review of its service standards and target levels of compliance as suggested by the MMC. However, I think it does need to continue to follow up the MMC recommendations on the development of its project appraisal techniques and on the management of capital projects, management information systems, and arrangements for consumer representation.

I welcome the generally positive attitude the companies have taken to the criticisms the MMC made on the way they ran their operations. They are setting more precise targets for meeting service standards and for operating costs. I like too the progress they are making to develop their corporate planning. The MMC mentioned incomplete or insufficient application of investment appraisal techniques by the companies. The companies are clearly doing something to remedy that.

I shall be following up the responses Southern and the companies have made, and will expect a second response from them on action they have taken and results achieved in the autumn. I have placed their first responses in the Library.

Palace Chambers, Bridge Street

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, when the demolition of Palace Chambers, Bridge Street, will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Demolition has now been completed down to first-floor level. This has removed the danger from overstressing of the supporting structure which had necessitated early demolition of the building. I propose to retain what remains temporarily, and to allow shops to continue trading on the ground floor, while plans for a new building are under consideration.

Slum Clearance Subsidy

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the efficiency scrutiny of slum clearance subsidy carried out in 1986.

Mr. Patten: I have placed in the Library a copy of the action plan containing our responses to the scrutiny and its recommendations. The scrutiny reported on the effectiveness of slum clearance subsidy as a policy instrument and identified the main issue as how to encourage good decisions at local level about clearance and renovation of very poor housing. In the action plan, we have accepted the key findings of the scrutiny. In particular we agree the importance of an area-based approach, with systematic review of all the options and the involvement of the private and voluntary sectors wherever possible. We propose to pilot test the approach to neighbourhood renewal assessment suggested and to consider what advice we can give to local authorities in the meantime on the renewal of private housing within the present financial and legislative system.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 8 April, *Official Report*, column *257*, whether he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* figures on the same basis for the metropolitan districts and *(b)* figures on the same basis for the London boroughs excluding rate support grant for the metropolitan police from both years.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members (Allowances)

Mr. Forth asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will publish the Top Salaries Review Body report about Members' secretarial, research and office equipment allowances; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The Top Salaries Review Body report about the secretarial, research and office equipment allowance for Members and the allowance for peers' secretarial costs, postage and certain additional expenses and the secretarial allowance for Ministers and other paid office holders in the House of Lords is published today. Copies are now available in the Vote Office. The Government are grateful to members of the review body for their report and the time and care which they have put into its preparation. Some of the recommendations would involve changes in the procedures for handling claims against the allowances which, as the review body points out, require consultations with the parties concerned. The Government would welcome the views of Parliament about the recommendations in the report before announcing firm views. They will announce decisions on the report and propose resolutions, as appropriate, to implement them in the light of those consultations.

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NATIONAL FINANCE

Liverpool Free Port

55. **Mr. Alton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the recent performance of Liverpool free port and its future prospects as a centre of trade.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my written answer given on 12 January 1987 at column 90. We have no further information at the present time.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the loss of revenue from a reduction of 1p in the standard rate of income tax in 1987-88 before counting allowances and reliefs other than the personal allowances; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing (i) the loss on earned and unearned income, respectively, (ii) the estimated saving in each allowance and relief, (iii) the net loss to the Exchequer and (iv) the distribution of the benefit by range of income and tax category.

Mr. Norman Lamont If the basic rate of income tax were changed on income before deduction of tax reliefs, the direct revenue cost of reducing the rate by 1p would be about £1·5 billion in a full year at 1987-88 income levels. This estimate assumes that reliefs (such as capital allowances) which are taken into account in arriving at taxable profits for schedule D would continue to be deductible. The table shows the cost by ranges of gross income of taxpayers. Further information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tax Unit's[1] Gross Income £ per annum	*Direct Revenue Cost £ million*
Under 5,000	40
5,000-10,000	300
10,000-15,000	400
15,000-20,000	320
20,000-30,000	280
Over 30,000	160

[1] Treating a married couple as a unit and combining the separate incomes.

Mr. Richard Page asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each state enterprise, the profits or losses for the three years before they were moved into the private sector and the profits or losses since privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is given in the table below for 11 major privatised companies.

Pre-tax profits £ million[1] (Years to end March)

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
British Aerospace 1981[2]	66	50	53	71	−15	82	120	151	182
Cable and Wireless 1981	55	59	61	64	89	157	190	245	295
Amersham International 1982	—	6	4	5	9	12	14	17	18
National Freight Consortium 1982[3]	—	7	4	4	10	12	17	29	37
Britoil 1982[2]	—	—	—	[4]—	486	550	650	731	[5]134
Associated British Ports 1983[2]	—	—	12	−10	6	15	−7	17	26
Enterprise Oil 1984[2]	—	—	—	—	—	[6]83	139	111	3
Jaguar 1984[2]	—	—	—	−32	10	50	92	121	121
British Telecom 1984	—	—	—	570	936	1,031	990	1,480	1,810
British Gas 1986	—	—	—	—	—	803	909	712	782
British Airways 1987	—	—	—	—	—	—	185	191	195

[1] All figures are taken from the relevant prospectuses and annual reports. They are given on a historic cost basis except those for Britoil (1982-85), Associated British Ports and British Gas, which are on a current cost basis.
[2] Years to end December.
[3] Report beginning October except for 1979 which is to end December.
[4] Britoil began trading separately from BNOC in 1982. Separate figures for earlier years not available.
[5] Figures for 1982-85 on current cost basis. 1986 figure is on historic cost basis: current cost figure not yet available.
[6] For 8 months to 31 December 1983. Enterprise Oil began trading separately from British Gas in 1983, separate figures for earlier years not available.

Note: All figures to nearest number.

Mr. Richard Page asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the state enterprises that have been moved into the private sector since 1979, together with the receipts obtained and the percentage shareholding that is still retained in any of those enterprises by the public sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information on privatisation proceeds for 1981-82 to 1985-86 is set out in table 2·2 of

the 1987 public expenditure White Paper, Cm 56-II. Figures for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are given in table 2·14 of the 1985 public expenditure White Paper, Cm 9428-II. In 1986-87, British Gas and British Airways were privatised. Total net receipts are £7,535 million from British Gas and £828 million from British Airways; both figures include instalment payments not yet made.

The Government retain holdings of ordinary shares in British Telecom (49·8 per cent.) and BP (31·7 per cent.)

Personal Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the forecast number in each personal category above and below the age of 65 years by total income bands of £1,000 to £20,000, by £2,000 to £30,000 and £5,000 up to £100,000, together with the number in excess of that amount.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply on 8 April 1987 at columns *264-66*.

VAT

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses have *(a)* registered for value added tax purposes and *(b)* de-registered for value added tax purposes in each of the last five years in (i) Burnley constituency and (ii) Pendle constituency.

Mr. Brooke: For reasons of cost, separate statistics are not maintained for individual constituencies, but all of the Burnley constituency and nearly all of the Pendle constituency are covered by the value added tax office at Accrington. The number of VAT registrations and deregistrations dealt with by that office in each of the calendar years 1982-1986 was:

	Registrations	*Deregistrations*
1982	1,294	1,268
1983	1,362	1,167
1984	1,367	1,330
1985	1,997	2,081
1986	2,115	2,229

Customs and Excise estimates that in each of the last two years about 13 per cent. of these businesses were located in the Burnley constituency area and about 12 per cent. in the Pendle constituency area.

Mr. Shersby asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress is being made towards a review of his value-added tax penalty provisions and the justice of these provisions, in accordance with the commitment contained in "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers", Cmnd. 9794; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In accordance with the commitment given in "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" the system of civil penalties, default surcharge and repayment supplement will be reviewed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer before the 1988 Budget, after a full year's practical experience of those parts of the system which came into effect only on 1 October 1986. In the meantime, as part of the background to the review, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is monitoring the operation of each part of the system and its impact on business, taking account of the views expressed by hon. Members and by all interested parties outside the House.

Unearned Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the gain to the Exchequer from raising the standard rate of tax on unearned income to 35 per cent.; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the distribution of the gain for those over and under age 65 by total income band and personal category.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This would depend on the detailed rules and thresholds for calculating the extra tax, for example in the case of a higher rate taxpayer with both earned and unearned income.

Government Advertising

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total expenditure on Government advertising in each of the last five years; and how much was spent on *(a)* television, *(b)* national newspapers, *(c)* local newspapers, *(d)* posters, *(e)* radio and *(f)* other media.

Mr. Brooke: Expenditure by the Central Office of Information on behalf of all Government Departments[1] in 1986-87 is listed below.

	£ 000's
Television advertising	54,200
Radio advertising	3,800
Press advertising:	
National newspapers	23,006
Local newspapers	3,836
Other press	7,041
Other promotional material	16,070

[1] Excluding Department for National Savings.

The figures for the years 1982-83 to 1985-86 are contained in the answer to a question from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 25 November 1986 at column *240-1*. The breakdown of expenditure on advertising in national and local newspapers for those years is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why Plessey has been dropped from the shortlist for the contract for the Government data network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: After a review of the four responses received, it was decided not to proceed further with the proposal from Plessey/CAP Network Services Ltd. For reasons of commercial confidentiality it would not be proper for details of the evaluation to be made public but in accordance with normal practice the members of the unsuccessful consortium have been debriefed by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency.

Personal Allowances and Expenses

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to which taxpayers the explanatory note Cyllid Y Wlad Treth Incwm, ref 510 (1987), has been issued; how many have been issued; and at what cost.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Isle of Man

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution the Isle of Man makes to the Exchequer to cover the cost of services provided for it.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Land (Capital Gains Tax)

Mr. MacLennan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the amount of revenue forgone in each financial year since 1981-82 as a result of conditional exemption from capital taxes on land allowed folllowing agreement between the Nature Conservancy Council and the owner;

(2) if he will state the total acreage of land *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in the United Kingdom exempted from capital gains tax in each financial year since 1981-82 under agreements reached between the owner and the Nature Conservancy Council providing for reasonable public access.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 April 1987, *c. 53*]: This information is not maintained centrally and could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Income Tax

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent evidence the Treasury has compiled on the effect on total revenue of marginal reductions in the lower rates of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 1978-79, the basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 33p to 27p and the total yield of income tax is expected to be over £1 billion higher in real terms in 1987-88. Tax revenues have therefore remained buoyant over this period when tax rates have been reduced.

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between levels of income tax and total tax yield.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Income tax is expected to be 25·6 per cent. of total direct and indirect taxes in 1987-88 compared with 26·3 per cent. in 1986-87 and 32·8 per cent. in 1978-79.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has for each year from 1979 to 1986 about the top rates of income tax and the basic rates of income tax, in the United States of America, Japan, and, each of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested on the top rates of income tax is given in the table. Amongst the countries concerned, the concept of a basic rate of income tax, as such, exists only in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The basic rates there have been:

United Kingdom
1979-80: 33 per cent.
1979-80 to 1985-86: 30 per cent.
1986-87: 29 per cent.

Ireland
35 per cent. throughout.

Top rates of income tax (per cent.)

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
United Kingdom	83	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
Ireland	60	60	60	60	60	65	65	60	58

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Belgium	76·0	76·0	76·0	76·0	76·0	76·0	76·0	76·0
Denmark	65·0	65·0	65·0	65·5	68·0	68·0	67·5	67·5
France	60·0	75·0	66·0	70·0	70·0	67·0	65·0	58·0
Germany	56·0	56·0	56·0	56·0	56·0	56·0	56·0	56·0
Greece	64·0	64·0	64·0	64·0	64·0	63·0	63·0	63·0
Italy	72·0	72·0	72·0	72·0	65·0	65·0	65·0	62·0
Japan	84·0	84·0	84·0	84·0	84·0	84·0	84·0	84·0
Luxembourg	58·0	58·0	58·0	60·0	62·0	63·0	63·0	61·0
Netherlands	72·0	72·0	72·0	72·0	72·0	72·0	72·0	72·0
Portugal	77·0	77·0	77·0	77·0	77·0	69·0	61·0	60·0
Spain	66·0	66·0	65·0	68·0	65·0	66·0	66·0	66·0
United States of America	55·5	55·5	55·5	55·5	55·5	55·5	55·5	55·5

Notes:
(1) The rates in the table are those applicable to employment income. Higher rates may apply to some or all investment income in Greece, Italy, Japan and Portugal.
(2) The rates are those applicable to a married couple. Higher rates apply to a single person in Portugal.
(3) The figures include local income taxes in Belgium, Denmark, Japan and the United States of America, at the following rates:
Belgium, Japan: those payable by the majority of the population
Denmark: Copenhagen; United States of America: California: rates typical of the whole country

NORTHERN IRELAND

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to the reply*, 30 March, c. *385*]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any current or former staff in his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to the reply*, 30 March, c. *385*]: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of Health on Wednesday 22 April, at columns 627-8.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to have a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to the reply*, 30 March, c. *385*]: In April 1986, the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the Chief Medical Officer DHSS, circulated all Departments with guidance to managers and model letters to staff.

Relevant guidance and information has been given to staff whose duties may put them in contact with AIDS sufferers or samples containing the AIDS Virus. Information has also been provided to personnel management and welfare staff.

The need for wider guidance is being kept under review.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hospitals (Exeter)

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the capital expenditure on hospitals in Exeter for each of the years 1975 to 1986.

Mr. Newton: Information is not held centrally in this precise form. Total capital expenditure on hospital and community health services in the Exeter district was:

	£ million
1982-83	3·7
1983-84	4·7
1984-85	5·0
1985-86	5·4

Notes.—The figures are those shown in the annual financial accounts of the Exeter health authority, together with capital expenditure specifically on behalf of the district shown in the annual accounts of the South Western regional health authority.

Before 1 April 1982, Exeter was part of the area of the Devon area health authority and information on a district basis was not collected centrally. If my hon. Friend wishes to seek further information, I suggest that he contacts the chairman of the Exeter health authority.

Pensioners

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners in Cleveland receive retirement pension without also receiving supplementary benefit, or housing benefit supplement, broken down into the following offices (i) Hadrian house, Eston, (ii) Crown house, Hartlepool, (iii) Royal house, Middlesbrough, (iv) Dawson house, Redcar and (v) Bridge street, Stockton.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available about the number of retirement pension recipients in any particular locality.

Single Payments

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of single discretionary payment claimants have been refused in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lyell: The percentage of single payments refused in each of the last three years is as follows:

Year (May-April)	*Percentage*
1984-85	18
1985-86	20
1986-87	[1]32

[1] Provisional figures for period May to March only.
Source: Management Information System (100 per cent. count).

Single-parent Families

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the number of single-parent families in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle constituencies where the head of the household was unemployed in 1979 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Benefits

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average amount per household paid in supplementary benefit in the area covered by the Burnley benefit office in January and equivalent dates since 1979.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients of supplementary benefit there were in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle constituencies in each year, respectively, from 1979 to 1986; and in each case how many were single-parent families.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 26 February 1987 at columns *395-96*. I regret that separate figures for single-parent families are not available.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle constituencies in 1986 were in receipt of supplementary benefit; and what percentage were (i) pensioners and (ii) families with children.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The constituencies of Burnley and Pendle are covered by the Department's local office at Burnley. The table shows the number of people receiving supplementary benefit from that office on 12 February 1986. Separate figures for the Burnley and Pendle constituencies cannot be provided.

	Number	Per cent.
Over pension age	5,851	(35·5)
Unemployed	5,937	(36·1)
Others	4,675	(28·4)
Total	16,463	(100·0)

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of people in each Lancashire district living in hotel bed and breakfast accommodation at the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) how many claimants *(a)* in Burnley and *(b)* in Pendle were living in ordinary board and lodgings at the latest date for which figures are available; and how many of these were having to pay more for their accommodation then the current upper ceiling laid down by regulations;

(3) how many claimants living in ordinary board and lodgings in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle are 25 years of age or younger.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only disproportionate cost.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of hospital beds in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority area on 30 November 1976, and each subsequent year at the same date.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority for the information he requires.

Private Patients

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of beds occupied by private patients by district health authority area in National Health Service hospitals in the North-Western regional health authority area at 1 December 1986.

Mrs. Currie: For the latest information available centrally, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 19 December 1986 at columns 799-808. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the North Western regional health authority for the more recent information he requires.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients have been carried per division by the Lancashire ambulance service *(a)* as emergencies and *(b)* as hospital transport in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement regarding the effects of the quota system.

Mrs. Currie: The available information in respect of the whole of the Lancashire ambulance service is given in the table. Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Lancashire ambulance authority
Number of patient-journeys[1]

	Emergency	[2]Non-emergency
1979	53,758	601,593
1980	53,378	593,229
1981	53,181	564,131
1982	54,320	589,269
1983	54,959	624,547
1984	56,224	618,061
1985	56,888	621,404

[1] One patient-journey means one patient carried in one direction, either to or from hospital.
[2] Includes agency services, supplementary services, rail and air.

Information is not collected centrally by division of the ambulance service. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Preston health authority which is responsible for managing the Lancashire ambulance service.

Information on the operation of the quota system introduced in 1976 which applies to non-emergency patient journeys only can also be obtained from the Preston health authority.

Drug-resistant Germs

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the dangers posed by the drug-resistant germ methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus bacteria, its estimated incidence at present and expected future incidence; what estimates he has made of the likelihood of an epidemic of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus; what efforts and expenditure are being devoted to combating it; and if guidelines are being issued to discourage constant use of broad-spectrum antibiotics.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) at columns *230-1* on 11 March, in which the measures being taken to combat staphylococcus aureus were described. Staphylococcus aureus is a pathogenic micro-organism which can cause skin infections, abscesses, osteomyelitis or other infections. At least one third of healthy people are carriers of some strain of staphylococcus aureus. There are now some strains of staphylococcus aureus which have become resistant to antibiotics; MRSA, the methicillin resistant strain, is an example. Outbreaks of MRSA appear to occur only in hospitals, where it can be a cause of post-operative wound infections.

In 1986, MRSA was reported by 170 hospitals participating in a national survey. The survey shows that 1,891 cases of MRSA were reported from England, Wales and the Channel Islands in the last nine months of 1986. Two thirds of these cases were from the Thames regions. Particular strains which spread more easily than others and have therefore been described by the term "epidemic MRSA" account for much of the incidence in the Thames regions.

It is not possible to forecast the future incidence of spread of MRSA. In some hospitals, outbreaks have been restricted and MRSA eradicated.

Doctors have been advised to avoid the constant use of broad-spectrum antibiotics. Articles in the medical press and in prescribers' journals have taken a similar line.

I am placing an updated fact sheet on MRSA in the Library.

Hay Fever

Mr. Ames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of people who suffer from hay fever.

Mrs. Currie: The Department does not collect figures on the incidence of hay fever. It has been estimated that 10 per cent. of the population may be affected.

Nurses

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district health authority and for each year since, and including 1983 *(a)* the total number of whole time nursing staff in post, excluding agency staff, expressed as whole time equivalents, *(b)* the normally-funded establishment of nurses expressed as whole-time equivalents and *(c)* the total number of staff in post expressed as a percentage of the normal establishment of nurses.

Mr. Newton: Information on funded establishments is not collected centrally and our funding of regional health authorities, which in turn decide allocations to districts is not on the basis of staff numbers at establishments but reflects an assessment of their relative population need in accordance with the principles set out by the Resource Allocation Working Group.

The table shows a breakdown of nursing and midwifery staffing totals into full-time numbers, part-time numbers, part-time whole-time equivalents and total whole-time equivalents. This information is not readily available centrally at district health authority level, and would be disproportionately expensive to obtain.

Nursing and Midwifery Staff (excluding agency staff): England
At 30 September

Year	*Number of whole-time staff*	*Number of part-time staff*	*Part-time whole- time equivalent*	*Total whole-time equivalent*
1983	297,000	155,400	97,700	394,700
1984	296,700	155,800	97,100	393,700
1985	298,600	159,800	98,400	397,000

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.
Notes: (1) Figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (100).
(2) Includes qualified nurses and midwives, learners and unqualified staff.
(3) Whole-time equivalent numbers of staff are calculated as the *number* of full-time staff, plus the total hours or sessions per week contracted by part-time staff divided by the number of hours or sessions in the appropriate standard working week for each group.

Chronically Sick and Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will extend and update, using the same format, the information given in the answer of 24 May 1985, *Official Report*, columns 587-88, relating to expenditure by his Department on benefits and services for the chronically sick and disabled, to cover additionally the years 1985-86 and 1986-87, taking 1986-87 as the price base for the information relating to expenditure at constant prices.

Mr. Major: The spending on benefits and on services provided directly by the Department for long-term sick and disabled people in the years 1970-71 to 1986-87 is given in the table. Information on the provision of services by health authorities and by local authorities specifically to this group is not available.

Year	*Expenditure in cash terms* £ *million*	*Expenditure in constant (1986-87) prices* £ *million*	*Real annual percentage change*
1970-71[1]	—	—	—
1971-72[2]	360	1,720	—
1972-73	510	2,280	33·0
1973-74	620	2,560	12·0
1974-75	800	2,790	9·0
1975-76	1,070	2,970	6·5
1976-77	1,290	3,170	7·0
1977-78	1,570	3,380	6·5
1978-79	1,830	3,560	5·5
1979-80	2,160	3,600	1·0
1980-81	2,560	3,600	0·0
1981-82	3,030	3,870	7·5
1982-83	3,560	4,250	9·5
1983-84	4,150	4,730	11·5
1984-85	4,590	5,020	6·0
1985-86	5,280	5,430	8·0
1986-87	6,090	6,090	12·0

[1] Comparable figures are not available as there were no benefits specifically for long term sick and disabled people.
[2] Not fully comparable with later years as invalidity benefit was introduced part way through the year.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate, at current and at constant 1986-87 prices, annual expenditure on social security benefits for the long-term sick and disabled in each year since 1974-75.

Mr. Major: Expenditure on benefits paid in consequence of long term sickness or disability is set out in the table.

Great Britain, £ *million*

Year	*Cash*	*Constant (1986-87 prices)*
1974-75	770	2,690
1975-76	1,030	2,860
1976-77	1,250	3,070
1977-78	1,520	3,270

Year	Cash	Constant (1986-87 prices)
1978-79	1,780	3,470
1979-80	2,100	3,500
1980-81	2,490	3,500
1981-82	2,950	3,770
1982-83	3,480	4,150
1983-84	4,060	4,630
1984-85	4,500	4,920
1985-86	5,190	5,350
1986-87	6,000	6,000

War Widows

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has carried out a comparative survey of the pension and benefits paid to war widows by the countries which took part in the second world war.

Mr. Lyell: Information obtained about the pensions and benefits paid to war widows in other countries has shown that it is extremely difficult to make any valid comparisons because different countries' schemes and benefits vary so substantially.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much pension is paid by his Department to the widow of a private soldier killed in the Falklands war;

(2) how much pension is paid by his Department to the widow of a private soldier killed in the second world war.

Mr. Lyell: Pensions paid to war widows under the war pension scheme are the same irrespective of the date of bereavement or the conflict in which the service man gave his life. Under the scheme, the widow of a private soldier receives a tax-free basic pension of £51·35 a week, plus an age allowance of £5·50 a week at age 65, rising to £11 at 70 and £13·85 at 80. Widows with dependent children also receive child allowances of £11·60 a week for each child, and may receive education and rent allowances. In addition, a war widow may also receive other benefits, such as a retirement pension if she has paid national insurance contributions.

Overseas Pensions

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the most recent available estimate of *(a)* the number of retired people, by country of residence, living abroad in a country with which Britain has no reciprocal social security agreement, and who would otherwise be receiving a state retirement pension and *(b)* the cost of paying a state retirment pension to these people.

Mr. Major: British retirement pensions are payable anywhere in the world. Cost-of-living increases are paid, however, only where there is a reciprocal agreement with the country concerned to provide for this.

The number of retirement pensioners who are living in a country with which the United Kingdom has no reciprocal social security agreement to provide for payment of the increase is as follows:

Number of Retirement Pensioners, in overseas Countries at 31 December 1985 (Latest Figures Available)

Country	Number
Albania	5
Algeria	1
Andorra	88
Angola	1
Anguilla	49
Antigua	119
Argentina	133
Australia	96,126
Bahamas	106
Bahrain	15
Bangladesh	1,253
Barbados	729
Belize	10
Bolivia	4
Botswana	38
Brazil	133
Brunei	9
Bulgaria	9
Burma	7
Cameroon	4
Canada	54,388
Cayman Islands	22
Chile	38
China	7
Colombia	23
Cook Islands	5
Costa Rica	5
Czechoslovakia	25
Djibouti	3
Dominica, Commonwealth of	233
Dominican Republic	132
East Germany	13
Ecuador	9
Egypt	34
El Salvador	1
Ethiopia	4
Falkland Islands and Dependencies	6
Faroe Islands	1
Fiji	27
Gabon	1
Gambia	5
Ghana	44
Grenada	298
Guatemala	3
Guyana	124
Haiti	1
Honduras	2
Hong Kong	331
Hungary	138
India	2,580
Indonesia	13
Iraq	3
Japan	42
Jordan	7
Kenya	345
Kiribati (Gilbert Islands)	2
Kuwait	6
Lebanon	26
Lesotho	6
Liberia	4
Libyan Arab Republic	2
Madagascar	2
Malawi	38
Malaya	45
Mexico	56
Monaco	160
Monserrat	180
Morocco	28
Mozambique	1
Nauru, Republic of	2
Nepal	14
Netherlands Antilles	6
New Zealand	23,167
Nigeria	69
Norfolk Island	11

Country	Number
Norway	119
Oman	8
Pakistan	3,369
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	17
Peru	34
Philippines	34
Poland	2,459
Puerto Rico	3
Qatar	6
Romania	19
Rwanda	2
St Helena and Dependencies	30
St Kitts-Nevis	277
St Lucia	350
St Vincent	237
Sarawak	2
Saudi Arabia	23
Senegal	8
Seychelles	24
Sierra Leone	33
Singapore	60
Solomon Islands	4
Somalia	134
South Africa	18,879
South Korea	2
South West Africa or Namibia	13
Sri Lanka	94
Sudan	9
Swaziland	42
Sweden	64
Syria	1
Taiwan	2
Tanzania	39
Thailand	31
Togo	1
Tonga	3
Trinidad and Tobago	251
Tunisia	8
Turks & Caicos Islands	2
Uganda	12
United Arab Emirates	22
USSR	741
Uruguay	16
Vanuatu (New Hebrides)	1
Venezuela	26
Virgin Islands	29
Western Samoa	7
Yemen Arab Republic (North)	719
Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of (South)	87
Zaire	5
Zambia	86
Zimbabwe	3,498

The annual cost of paying these retirement pensions was £168 million in November 1985. Payment at the full November 1985 rates would have cost an additional £166 million.

Severe Weather Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will extend the deadline for claiming severe weather payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 provide for claims to be made within 13 weeks of the end of a period of exceptionally cold weather. The period was increased from 28 days in the original proposals following consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee. We have no plans to amend the regulations.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cold weather payments have been made in 1987 at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Up to 10 March, the latest date for which information is available, approximately 2 million exceptionally cold weather payments of £5 had been made.

Waiting Lists

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement about the allocation of waiting list funds to the North East Thames regional health authority, and the North East Essex health authority; and what effect he estimates this allocation of funds will have on waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: North East Thames regional health authority has received £2·070 million from the waiting list fund in 1987-88. This will support some 31 separate projects, enabling hospitals in the region to treat 7,000 extra waiting list cases, and reduce waiting times for some first out-patient appointments. North East Essex district health authority will receive £39,000 from the region's allocation for a project to purchase a laser which will treat 150 extra ophthalmic out-patients and reduce in-patient waiting lists.

Member's Letters

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) will reply to the letter passed to him on 5 March by the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne on behalf of Mr. R. W. W. Flynn, of 21 Penmayne parc, Lanner, Redruth, Cornwall.

Mr. Lyell: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

TRANSPORT

Public Transport (Country Visits)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that public transport facilities exist to enable those who do not own, or have access to, a car to visit the countryside for the purpose of informal outdoor recreation, especially at weekends, as recommended by Countryside Commission.

Mr. David Mitchell: The aim of the Government's policy is to enable bus and coach operators to respond to public demand, for both work and recreational journeys. I have no reason to doubt that they will be eager to respond to the Countryside Commission's initiatives to promote wider enjoyment of the countryside by providing services to meet any new demand.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make available in the Library the draft loan arrangement document for the financing of the Channel tunnel, which was referred to by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell) on 3 February, *Official Report*, column 870; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what date the terms of the draft loan arrangement document for the financing of the Channel tunnel were first made public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The draft loan arrangement document to which I referred on 3 February, at column 870, is a private document, but a summary of it was included as appendix IV of the Eurotunnel prospectus produced in October 1986, copies of which were provided to members of the Standing Committee which considered the Channel Tunnel Bill. That summary includes, at page 70, a reference to the loan from the European Investment Bank, which was under discussion at column 870.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement setting out the manner in which Her Majesty's Government communicated to British Rail the undertaking set out by the Minister of State on 3 February, *Official Report*, column 863, requiring British Rail to omit any provision for advance toll payments from the final usage contract for the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: In October 1986 British Rail was instructed by letter to omit any provision for advance toll payments from the final rail usage contract for the Channel tunnel, because to the extent that such payments were made from Government funds they would be contrary to article 1 of the Channel Fixed Link Treaty. As I explained to the House on 3 February, at columns 863-64, clause 40 was introduced into the Channel Tunnel Bill to prevent payment of Government grant to British Rail for Channel tunnel services. There is thus no longer any risk of breach of the treaty, so the instruction to British Rail has been rescinded.

Light Dues

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of representations he has received, he will now withdraw his proposals to extend light dues liability to fishing vessels.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Rail Commuter Services

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the percentage increase in use of commuter services by rail for each of the past five years for the London and home counties area.

Mr. David Mitchell: The annual percentage change in the number of commuters using British Rail's Network South-East services for each of the past five years is as follows:

	Percentage
1982	−1·0
1983	−1·5
1984	+0·5
1985	+3·8
1986	+4·7

Planning Consents

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received opposing the Government's intentions to seek to end the right of highway authorities to oppose planning consents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received nine representations against the proposal, together with 91 submitted by hon. Members on behalf of county highway authorities. Concern has been expressed that if the power of direction is removed developments may be allowed which would lead to road accidents or that developers will no longer make payments to highway authorities where road improvements or other changes are needed to accommodate their developments.

These fears are not justified. Local highway authorities will have the right to be consulted on development proposals and to put their views to planning authorities. The latter will also be in a position to ensure that in appropriate cases arrangements are made by developers for payment of or a contribution towards the costs of highway works needed in connection with their developments.

A12

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet appointed consultants to consider the upgrading of the A12 trunk road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A further study of the future needs of the A12 between M25 and Chelmsford was announced in the White Paper—"Policy for Roads in England: 1987"—published yesterday. Consultants will be appointed in due course.

Road Deaths

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the percentage increase or decrease in road deaths in the eastern area based on Bedford for the latest period for which statistics are available; how this compares with the national figure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is given on page 37 of "Road Accident Statistics English Regions 1985", a copy of which is in the Library. Eastern region deaths fell by 3 per cent. between 1980 and 1985, compared with a 13 per cent. fall in England as a whole. Part of the reason for this may be the higher than average traffic growth in eastern region. This is shown in "Statistics Bulletin (87)31", which is also in the Library.

Bus Services

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any representations concerning bus services in Bexley and in particular proposed route T1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received representations from residents of Hythe avenue, Bexleyheath about the proposed use of the road by London Regional Transport for the proposed T1 bus route. I understand that the revised proposals for changes to bus services in the Bexleyheath area are currently subject to formal consultation by London Regional Transport with the police, local authorities, London Regional Passengers' Committee and other interested parties.

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with consultation procedures adopted by London Regional Transport in connection with changes to bus services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Where London Regional Transport proposes to provide, or secure the provision of, a new London bus service or vary an existing one it is required by the Transport Act 1985 first to consult the police, the local authorities affected, the London Regional Passengers' Committee, and any other person it thinks fit. It must be a matter for LRT's judgment as to which other persons to consult in particular cases, but it is its normal practice where major changes are contemplated also to undertake a wider preliminary consultation exercise involving passengers' and residents' groups and affording widespread local publicity of the proposals. I am satisfied that these procedures generally work well.

Woolwich Ferry and Tunnel

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what interruptions to the operation of lifts serving the Woolwich to North Woolwich foot tunnel have occurred in the last three months; and what steps he is taking to ensure that this service will be fully effective in future.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The London boroughs of Greenwich and Newham assumed responsibility for the Woolwich foot tunnel on 1 April 1986. Questions on its operation are a matter for them.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what services were planned for the Woolwich free ferry for the weeks commencing 20 and 27 April, respectively; what services were run; and what cancelled to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A normal two-boat service was planned. There was a normal service on 20 April, a reduced one-boat service on 21 to 24 and 27 to 28 April and no service on 25 and 26 April.

Road Maintenance (Shropshire)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the expenditure on road maintenance in the county of Shropshire for each year from 1978-79.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expenditure on county roads in Shropshire for the years before 1982-83 cannot be provided without disproportionate expenditure of staff effort.

The expenditure on maintenance of all roads in Shropshire, including trunk roads, for subsequent years was:

	£ million
1983-84	8·767
1984-85	9·723
1985-86	10·317
1986-87	12·099

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the strength of reserve forces; and what changes are planned for the future.

Mr. Freeman: The reserve forces make anessential contribution to our defence effort and a continuing expansion is in hand. Details of the strength if the reserves are published in volume II of the annual defence White Paper. The latest available figures, 1 January 1987, are as follows:

	'000
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	
Regular Reserves	26·7
Volunteer Reserves and Auxiliary Forces	6·6
Army	
Regular Reserves	158·8
Territorial Army	77·9
Ulster Defence Regiment	6·6
Home Service Force	3·3
RAF	
Regular Reserves	32·5
Volunteer Reserves and Auxiliary Forces	1·3

Cruise Missiles (Molesworth)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's estimate of the cost of deploying Cruise missiles at Molesworth; and how much has been spent so far.

Mr. Stanley: It is estimated that the total cost of constructing the Cruise missile base at RAF Molesworth will be some £45 million, of which about 70 per cent. has already been spent. A further £5 million (of which 80 per cent. has already been spent) is required to fund outer perimeter fencing for the base, the construction of a base perimeter road and local road improvements.

NATO and Warsaw Pact Forces

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current balance of nuclear and conventional and chemical forces between North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to annex A of volume I of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763).

Military Bases

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many military bases in the United Kingdom are *(a)* under United Kingdom command *(b)* under United States command and *(c)* under joint command.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *594*]: There are approximately 700 principal military bases and facilities in the United Kingdom wholly under United Kingdom command. There are a further 66 military bases and facilities in the United Kingdom made available for use by United States forces under United States national command. The United States authorities are largely responsible for the administrative control of these bases and facilities, but for the great majority of United States military installations there are RAF station commanders who have the responsibilities set out in my answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strong) on 26 February 1986 at columns *360-61*. In addition, there are two NATO armament depots under United Kingdom command but providing a service for the United States forces. There are no military bases or facilities under joint United Kingdom/United States command.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed by the Defence Export Services Organisation; and what proportion of them travel abroad in a representational capacity.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two hundred and forty six people are employed by the DESO, including 19 service personnel. Of these some 35 per cent. travel abroad in a representational capacity.

Liquid Fuels

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the latest estimate of outturn expenditure on liquid fuels, net of appropriation in aid, for the financial year 1986-87;

(2) on what assumption for *(a)* the world oil price in dollars and *(b)* the exchange rate between the pound sterling and the dollar, his Department has estimated spending on liquid fuels for the financial year 1987-88;

(3) what was the level of consumption of liquid fuels in petajoules, by his Department in *(a)* 1984-85, *(b)* 1985-86, *(c)* 1 April to 31 December 1985 and *(d)* 1 April to 31 December 1986;

(4) what is the estimated level of consumption of liquid fuels in particular by his Department in *(a)* 1986-87 and *(b)* 1987-88;

(5) what savings in the annual consumption of liquid fuels in petajoules his Department has achieved as a result of the opening of the Mount Pleasant airport and other investments in the Falklands.

Mr. Freeman: I shall answer shortly.

Trident

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the money already spent on Trident is with United States companies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: About £300 million.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the Trident budget is allocated to the capital costs of the servicing of Britain's Trident submarines and missiles at Kings Bay, Georgia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given at column *199* on 13 February 1985. At current prices, this amounts to some 1 per cent. of the total United Kingdom Trident budget.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the terms of the cancellation clauses for the Trident project which apply specifically to commitments entered into with United States suppliers; and what is his estimate of the total sum which would be payable to those United States suppliers in the event of cancellation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The contracts entered into with United States suppliers which cover work for the United Kingdom Trident project provide for the contracting authority to terminate the contract at any time, with payment to the contractor of properly incurred liabilities.

The current contractual commitment in the United States for the United Kingdom Trident project is some £700 million. A lesser sum should be payable in the event of cancellation.

Engineering Apprenticeships (Women)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions apply to women seeking to take an engineering apprenticeship with the armed services.

Mr. Freeman: Women are not eligible for engineering apprenticeships with the armed services. A range of technical trades are, however, open to women, and their successful completion leads to qualifications which are recognised by the appropriate technical bodies.

War Widows

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much money is paid by his Department each year to the widow of a private soldier killed in the Falklands war.

Mr. Freeman: The widow of a private soldier killed in the Falklands war would, at current rates, receive a pension of £2,709 per annum from my Department under the armed forces occupational pension scheme. A war widow's pension would also be paid by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much money is paid by his Department each year to the widow of a private soldier killed in the second world war.

Mr. Freeman: The widow of a private soldier killed in the second world war would not receive a pension from my Department under the armed forces occupational pension scheme. A war widow's pension would, however, be paid by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Cyprus (Visit)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report on his recent visit to military bases in Cyprus.

Mr. Younger: On 22-23 April I paid a short routine visit to British forces and installations in Cyprus. The visit had been planned for some time as a follow-up to my previous visit to Cyprus in February. In speaking to senior officers and indeed to service men of all ranks, I found that, despite the additional commitments imposed by the requirements of security following the terrorist attack in Akrotiri last August and more recently the shooting attack on 20 April, morale remains high. The troops are still able to take advantage of the adventurous training and sporting opportunities in Cyprus.

While in Cyprus I was able to visit the two casualties of last week's shooting. The driver has now been discharged from hospital and the condition of his passenger, the daughter of another British service man, is much improved. I take this opportunity to commend once again the courage and quick thinking of the driver, Corporal Bailey, whose evasive action almost certainly prevented fatalities. I also wish to express my appreciation for the skill of the Cypriot police in making two early arrests in connection with this incident. We will continue to provide them with every assistance in their investigation.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 30 April 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Overtime (West Midlands)

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to the number of hours of overtime worked, together with the annual costs, for each year since 1978 within H Division (Walsall) of the West Midlands police authority.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the west midlands that the information for each of the financial years 1978-79 to 1985-86 is as follows:

Financial year	*Number of hours of overtime worked*	*Annual cost approximate*
1978-79	73,330	[1]n.a.
1979-80	79,754	[1]n.a.
1980-81	77,705	370,000
1981-82	60,410	320,000
1982-83	49,721	300,000
1983-84	[2]50,761	330,000
1984-85	[3]45,119	320,000
1985-86	47,149	350,000
1986-87	[4]39,250	310,000

[1] Not available.
[2] Does not include overtime in connection with policing the miners' dispute.
[3] Does not include overtime in connection with the Handsworth disturbance.
[4] Does not include overtime in connection with the Wolverhampton disturbance.

Police Employment (West Midlands)

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to the number of police officers employed at H Division (Walsall) of the West Midlands police authority for each year since 1978, together with the authorised establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested has been obtained from the chief constable and is as follows:

H Division (Walsall)

On 31 December	*Establishment*[1]	*Police strength*
1978	423	384
1979	423	400
1980	423	419
1981	421	427
1982	419	429
1983	419	423
1984	419	413
1985	417	415
1986	424	408
On 31 March 1987	424	421

[1] As set by the Chief Constable.

Murder (Life Sentences)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently serving life sentences for murder; and what is the average cost per week of their upkeep.

Mr. Mellor: On 28 February 1987, the latest date for which figures are readily available, it is estimated that 1,775 prisoners were serving life sentences for murder in prison department establishments in England and Wales. Detainees during Her Majesty's pleasure and persons sentenced to custody for life are included. Estimates of average costs per inmate are not available for specific types of prisoner but detailed information on average weekly costs for establishments was published in the "Report on the Work of the Prison Department 1985/86" (Cm. 11, appendix 3, tables E, F).

Burglary

Mr. James Lamond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to deal with the rise in the number of acts of burglary over the past eight years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware that a number of chief officers of police, who are responsible for deciding how their available resources should be deployed, have decided to target "burglaries" in their strategies for 1987. But most burglaries are opportunist; some 25 per cent. do not even involve forced entry. There is therefore, much scope for preventive action to reduce their incidence and, in particular, for extending such crime prevention activity as the community programme crime prevention inititative, which is already responsible for 73 lock fitting schemes, and neighbourhood watch. In addition, the guidance notes issued by the British Standards Institution and the National House Building Council should help to ensure that new homes are built to a standard of security which will be a further deterrent to potential burglars.

Naturalisation

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time now taken in dealing with an application for naturalisation.

Mr. Waddington: Applications for naturalisation as a British citizen granted in March 1987 had taken an average of 16 months to complete. Very much less time is taken to complete applications for registration. Applications for registration completed in March 1987 had taken on average five months to complete.

Infant Life Preservation Act 1929

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received seeking amendments to the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In the last two months, we have received representations from five right hon. or hon. Members on behalf of constituents, and two letters from members of the public, about the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 and the recent court decision in the case of C *v.* S.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the date when new accommodation will be available at Leeds prison.

Mr. Mellor: Two new living blocks are due to be started in August 1989 and to be completed in August 1991. These will provide an additional 476 places, but as the existing wings require refurbishing, the new blocks will be used in the first instance to accommodate prisoners from these wings, which will be decanted two at a time to allow the refurbishment to be undertaken. The refurbishment is at present planned to be carried out over a five-year period from November 1991 to December 1996.

Broadcasting

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide for a mandatory system of licensing of new audio and audio-visual recordings for broadcasting or public performance.

Mr. Mellor: We see no necessity in view of the controls which already exist under broadcasting legislation, the Video Recordings Act 1984 and the Obscene Publications Act.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the playing of obscene, indecent or violent records by radio stations; and will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None. The IBA and the BBC are responsible for ensuring that their respective broadcasting services meet acceptable standards.

Rape Victims

Dame Peggy Fenner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the county constabularies which have complied with his Department's guidelines on the provisions and procedures for interviewing victims of rape;

(2) if he will list the county constabularies which have not yet complied with his Department's guidelines on provision and procedures for interviewing victims of rape;

(3) if he is satisfied with progress towards complying with his Department"s guidelines to chief constables, in respect of provisions and procedures for interviewing victims of rape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The guidance contained in Home Office circular 69/1986 on violence against women was issued last October after consultations with chief officers of police and deals with operational matters which are their responsibility. We have no authority to issue instructions to chief officers in these matters but Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary discuss with them progress in implementing the circular's recommendations during the course of their annual inspections. The indications so far are that chief officers are responding positively to the circular"s recommendations.

Suspects (Identification)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police authorities that now have one-way viewing screens installed at police stations for the identification of suspects as provided for in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The installation of screens for use in identification parades is a matter for individual police forces. No information about their numbers is held centrally.

Nuclear War (Contingency Plans)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions with local authorities and others he has had on contingency plans in the event of a nuclear war.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Plans against nuclear attack are part of a broad range of civil protection arrangements, which are the subject of frequent discussions between the Department, local authorities and other bodies.

Terrorism

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the comments sent him by Mr. Robert Kee on his decision announced in the House on 20 January to refer the Birmingham pub bombings case to the Court of Appeal, he will reconsider his decision not to make a similar reference of, or appoint an appropriate inquiry into, the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case and that of Mrs. Anne Maguire, the late Patrick "Guiseppe" Conlan and their co-defendants.

Mr. Mellor: We have already said that we are considering a number of matters raised in Yorkshire Television's "First Tuesday" programme on 3 March, and other material sent to us about the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case. We have asked the chief constable of Surrey constabulary for his comments on a specific point which has been raised about the case of Mrs. Anne Maguire and her co-defendants.

Nuclear Disasters

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cumbria as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Chapelcross *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles, *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population within (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles of the power station, *(c)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of the population of Carlisle, *(d)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high risk groups from Carlisle, *(e)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of low mobility groups from Carlisle, and *(f)* what time estimates have been made for the distribution of potasium iodate tablets to the population of Carlisle; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculation of any such time estimates to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c. *130*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Energy on 22 April at column 550.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing stock

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimate of the value of the housing stock in England and Wales in April 1986 and of the percentage increase in value since then; what are the comparable rateable values; and what is his estimate of the amount collected in rates on dwellings in the year 1986-87.

Mr. Tracey: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Nitrogen Dioxide

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the levels of nitrogen dioxide at roadside monitoring sites in London; and what information he has about comparable EEC air quality standards.

Mr. Waldegrave: The results of kerbside monitoring in London of levels of nitrogen dioxide are published annually as a supplement to the "Digest of Environmental Projection and Water Statistics" and placed in the Library of the House. Data over the last four years for kerbside site 1 are given here and include figures for 1985 due to be published in May.

NO_2, Concentrations Expressed as Parts Per Billion

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Annual Average	46	65	49	48
Maximum Monthly 99th Percentile of hourly average concentrations	220	330	158	200

Monitoring for the purposes of EEC directive 85/203/EEC, air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide, should be as far as possible representative of the individual risk of exceeding the limit value. (98th percentile of hourly average NO_2 concentrations per year of 200 micrograms per cubic metre, 104·6 parts per billion). Because the general public spend only a limited amount of time at the kerbside such areas are not considered relevant for monitoring with regard to the directive.

Estate Agents (Boards)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any request from the London borough of Camden under the 1984 advertising regulations for power to control estate agents boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No; I have received no such request.

Regulation 15(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1984 enables the local planning authority to make representations to my right hon. Friend in favour of a direction that the provisions of regulation 14 for display, with "deemed consent", of certain types of outdoor advertisement (including estate agents' boards) shall not apply in a particular area or case. My right hon. Friend will naturally consider any such request which the council of the London borough of Camden may submit to him.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if any research has been undertaken into public attitudes to radioactive waste management.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Social Community Planning Research Council has today published a report, "Radioactive Waste Disposal: The Public's View", of research commissioned by my Department, involving a study of public perceptions of, and attitudes to, radioactive waste management in England and Wales. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Philip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the first rate support grant supplementary report 1978-88 will be published.

Mr. Ridley: I have laid this report before the House today.

The main purpose of the report is to honour the undertaking given on 30 October in the House of Commons by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to increase the expenditure provision for local authorities by £460 million and block grant by £183 million to cover the increased cost of school teachers' pay. The report would also make a small number of changes to authorities' grant-related expenditure assessments to take account of new information on capital allocations for personal social services and waste disposal, and boundary changes made on 1 April 1986 and 1 April 1987.

My Department is sending a copy of the report and tables showing exemplifications of likely revised grant entitlements to all local authorities and the local authority associations. Copies are being placed in the Library of the House of Commons and in the Vote Office.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the interim results of the survey of the quality of bathing waters he announced on 3 December 1985; and if, in the light of these results, he is satisfied with the quality of the United Kingdom's bathing waters.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 April 1987, c. *388*]: The results for the 1986 bathing season of the survey which I announced on 18 December 1985, are now available, and are set out in summary form for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The opportunity has been taken to include results for the extra waters included in my announcement of 3 February and also for two further waters.

The individual results indicate compliance with the bacteriological parameters total and faecal coliforms specified by the bathing water directive. They show that 228 out of 368 bathing waters in England, Northern Ireland and Wales—62 per cent.—meet the directive's standards, although I am advised that the conclusions, drawn only from the first year's monitoring results, should be regarded as provisional.

Nevertheless, the results are encouraging and indicate that with the improvement schemes now being undertaken

or planned by water authorities, we are well on the way towards achieving our target that all identified waters should meet the directive's standards.

I shall arrange for a more detailed summary of the results to be placed in the Library. The results will also be sent to the Commission in accordance with article 13 of the bathing water directive.

Bathing Waters Survey—1986 Results (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) Compliance with Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC): Coliform Standards

	Results
Northumbrian Water Authority	
Spittal	Fail
Bamburgh-Seahouses	Pass
Beadnell Bay	Pass
Low Newton	Pass
Alnmouth	Pass
Warkworth	Pass
Druridge	Pass
Newbiggin	Fail
South Beach-Seaton Sluice (incomplete returns)	Fail
Whitley Sands (incomplete returns)	Pass
Tynemouth (incomplete returns)	Fail
South Shields	Fail
Marsden (incomplete returns)	Pass
Whitburn-Roker	Pass
Seaham (incomplete returns)	Fail
Crimdon	Fail
Seaton Carew	Fail
Redcar	Fail
Saltburn Pier	Fail
Yorkshire Water Authority	
Staithes (no results available)	—
Runswick Bay	Pass
Sandsend	Pass
Whitby	Pass
Robin Hoods Bay	Pass
Scarborough North Bay	Pass
Scarborough South Bay	Fail
Cayton Bay	Pass
Filey	Pass
Reighton	Pass
Flamborough North Landing	Pass
Flamborough South Landing	Fail
Bridlington North Beach	Pass
Bridlington South Beach	Pass
Wilsthorpe	Pass
Fraisthorpe	Pass
Earl's Dyke	Pass
Barmston	Pass
Skipsea	Pass
Hornsea	Pass
Tunstall	Pass
Withernsea	Fail
Anglian Water Authority	
Cleethorpes	Fail
Mablethorpe, Town	Pass
Sutton-on-sea	Fail
Moggs Eye	Pass
Anderby	Pass
Chapel St. Leonard	Pass
Ingoldmells, South	Pass
Skegness	Pass
North Beach, Heacham	Pass
Old Hunstanton	Pass
Wells (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Sheringham (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Cromer (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Mundesley (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Great Yarmouth Cg (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Great Yarmouth Pier (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Great Yarmouth Hospital (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Lowestoft N Beach (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Lowestoft S Beach (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Felixstowe N Beach (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Felixstowe S Beach (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Dovercourt	Pass
Walton	Pass
Frinton	Pass
Holland	Pass
Clacton East	Pass
Jaywick	Pass
Brightlingsea	Pass
Thames Water Authority	
Southend Thorpe Bay	Fail
Southend Westcliff	Pass
Southern Water Authority	
Leysdown (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
West Beach (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Herne Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Minnis Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
St. Mildred's Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Margate	Pass
Margate (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Joss Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Broadstairs (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Ramsgate (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Sandwich Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Deal Castle (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
St. Margarets Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Folkestone (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Sandgate (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Hythe (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Dymchurch (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
St. Mary's Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Littlestone (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Camber	Pass
Winchelsea	Pass
Hastings	Pass
Bexhill	Pass
Norman's Bay	Pass
Pevensey Bay	Pass
Eastbourne	Pass
Seaford	Fail
Newhaven	Pass
Saltdean and Rottingdean	Pass
Brighton	Pass
Hove	Fail
Shoreham	Pass
South Lancing	Fail
Worthing	Fail
Littlehampton	Pass
Middleton-on-Sea	Pass
Bognor Regis	Pass
Pagham	Pass
Selsey	Pass
Bracklesham Bay	Pass
West Wittering	Pass
West of Eaststoke	Pass
West Hayling	Pass
Eastney	Pass
Southsea	Pass
Stokes Bay	Pass
Lee-on-Solent	Pass
Calshot	Pass
Lepe	Pass
Milford-on-sea	Pass
Christchurch Bay	Pass
Highcliffe	Pass
Compton Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Totland Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Colwell Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Gurnard (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Cowes (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Ryde	Fail
St. Helens (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Seagrove (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Bembridge (Incomplete Returns)	Fail

	Results
Whitecliff Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Sandown	Pass
Shanklin	Pass
Ventnor (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Wessex Water Authority (South Coast)	
Christchurch, Highcliffe	Pass
Christchurch, Avon Beach	Pass
Christchurch, Mudeford Sandbank W (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Bournemouth, Hengistbury (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Bournemouth, Pier	Pass
Poole, Shore Road Sandbanks	Pass
Poole Harbour, Shore Road (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Poole Harbour, Lake	Pass
Poole Harbour, Rockley Sands	Fail
Shell Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Studland (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Swanage	Pass
Kimmeridge Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Lulworth Cove (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Durdle Door, East (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Durdle Door, West (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Ringstead (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Bowleaze Cove (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Church Ope Cove (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Weymouth, Lodmoor (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Weymouth, Central	Pass
Portland Harbour, Castle Cove	Pass
Portland Harbour, Sandsfoot Castle	Pass
West Bay (West) (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Eype Mouth (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Seatown (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Charmouth W2	Fail
South West Water Authority	
Lyme Regis (incomplete returns)	Fail
Seaton (Devon)	Pass
Beer	Pass
Sidmouth Town and Jacobs Ladder	Pass
Budleigh Salterton	Pass
Sandy Bay (Exmouth)	Pass
Exmouth	Fail
Dawlish Warren	Pass
Dawlish	Pass
Teignmouth	Pass
Shaldon	Fail
Ness Cove	Pass
Maidencombe (Torquay)	Pass
Watcombe (Torquay)	Pass
Oddicombe (Torquay)	Pass
Babbacombe (Torquay)	Pass
Redgate (Torquay)	Pass
Meadfoot (Torquay)	Pass
Torre Abbey (Torquay)	Pass
Hollicombe (Paignton)	Pass
Paignton Beach	Pass
Goodrington (Paignton)	Pass
Broadsands (Paignton)	Pass
Shoalstone	Pass
St. Mary's Bay	Pass
Dartmouth Castle	Pass
Blackpool Sands	Pass
Slapton Sands Monument and Torcross	Pass
Mill Bay	Pass
Salcombe North Sands	Fail
Salcombe South Sands	Fail
Hope Cove	Pass
Thurlestone	Fail
Bantham	Pass
Bigbury	Pass
Challaborough	Pass
Mothecombe	Pass
Wembury	Pass
Bovisand	Pass
Plymouth Hoe	Fail
Seaton (Cornwall)	Fail

	Results
East Looe	Pass
Readymoney	Fail
Polkerris	Pass
Par and Spit (Par)	Fail
Crinnis	Pass
Charlestown and Duporth	Pass
Porthpean	Pass
Pentewan	Fail
Polstreath	Pass
Port Mellon	Pass
Gorran Haven	Pass
Porthluney	Pass
Pendower	Pass
Gyllyngvase	Pass
Swanpool	Pass
Maen Porth	Pass
Porthallow	Fail
Porthoustock	Pass
Coverack	Pass
Kennack Sands	Pass
Mullion Cove	Fail
Polurrian Cove	Pass
Poldhu Cove	Pass
Gunwalloe Cove	Pass
Porthleven	Fail
Praa Sands	Pass
Perran Sands	Pass
Marazion and Mounts Bay	Fail
Porthcurno	Pass
Sennen	Pass
St. Ives Porthmeor	Pass
St. Ives Porth Gwidden	Fail
St. Ives Porthminster	Pass
Carbis Bay	Pass
The Towans (Hayle-Gwithian)	Pass
Portreath	Pass
Porth Towan	Pass
Trevaunance Cove	Fail
Perranporth	Pass
Holywell Bay	Pass
Crantock	Pass
Newquay Fistral	Pass
Newquay Towan	Pass
Watergate	Pass
Mawgan Porth	Fail
Treyarnon Bay	Pass
Harlyn Bay	Pass
Trevone Bay	Fail
Rock	Fail
Daymer Bay	Pass
Polzeath	Pass
Widemouth Sand	Pass
Bude	Fail
Hartland Quay	Pass
Westward Ho!	Pass
Instow	Fail
Saunton Sands	Pass
Croyde Bay	Pass
Woolacombe	Pass
Ilfracombe	Fail
Combe Martin	Fail
Lynmouth	Fail
Wessex Water Authority (Bristol channel)	
Porlock Weir (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Minehead Terminus (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Dunster Nw (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Blue Anchor W (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Burnham Jetty (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Berrow	Pass
Brean	Pass
Weston-super-mare, Uphill Slipway	Pass
Weston-super-mare, Grand Pier	Fail
Weston-super-mare, Sand Bay (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
Clevedon Swimming Pool (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Welsh Water Authority	

	Results
Barry, Jacksons Bay (Incomplete returns)	Fail
Barry, Whitmore Bay	Fail
Barry, Cold Knap (Incomplete returns)	Fail
Southerndown	Fail
Trecco Bay	Fail
Sandy Bay	Fail
Rest Bay	Fail
Aberavon	Fail
Swansea Bay (Incomplete returns)	Fail
Bracelet Bay	Pass
Limeslade Bay	Fail
Langland Bay	Fail
Caswell Bay	Pass
Oxwich Bay	Pass
Port Eynon	Pass
Rhossili Bay	Fail
Pembrey	Pass
Pendine	Pass
Amroth	Fail
Saundersfoot	Pass
Tenby North	Pass
Tenby South	Fail
Broadhaven	Fail
Newgale	Fail
Whitesands	Pass
Newport Sands North (Incomplete returns)	Pass
Newquay	Pass
Aberystwyth South	Fail
Aberystwyth North	Pass
Borth	Pass
Tywyn	Fail
Fairbourne	Pass
Barmouth	Pass
Llandanwg	Pass
Harlech	Pass
Morfa Bychan	Fail
Criccieth	Pass
Pwllheli	Pass
Abersoch	Pass
Treaddur Bay	Fail
Benllech (Incomplete returns)	Pass
Llandudno, West Shore	Fail
Llandudno, North	Pass
Colwyn Bay	Pass
Kinmel Bay	Fail
Rhyl	Fail
Prestatyn	Fail
North West Water Authority	
Dove Point, Meols (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Pasture Road, Moreton (Incomplete Returns)	Pass
New Brighton (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Formby	Pass
Ainsdale	Fail
Southport	Fail
St. Annes	Fail
Blackpool, (Squires Gate-South Shore)	Fail
Blackpool, (South Shore-Central Pier)	Fail
Blackpool, (Central Pier-North Shore)	Fail
Blackpool, (North Shore-Cleveleys)	Fail
Cleveleys	Fail
Fleetwood Pier	Fail
Heysham Half Moon Bay	Fail
Morecambe, (West End Pool-Sandylands)	Fail
Morecambe, (West End Pool-Leisure Park) Stone Jetty	Fail
Morecambe, (Trinity House-Leisure Park) Central	Fail
Morecambe, (Bare Pool-Trinity House Slipway) Bare	Fail
Bardsea (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Walney Island, Biggar Bank	Pass
Walney Island, Sandy Gap	Pass
Walney Island, West Shore	Fail
Roan Head	Fail
Askam-in-Furness	Fail
Haverigg (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Silecroft (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Seascale (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
St. Bees (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Allonby (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Silloth (Incomplete Returns)	Fail
Northern Ireland Water Service	
Benone (No Results Available)	—
Castlerock (No Results Available)	—
Portstewart	Pass
Portrush	Pass
Ballycastle (No Results Available)	—
Brown's Bay (No Results Available)	—
Helen's Bay (No Results Available)	—
Crawfordsburn (No Results Available)	—
Bangor (Ballyholme)	Fail
Groomsport	Pass
Millisle (No Results Available)	—
Newcastle	Fail
Cranfield (No Results Available)	—
Tyrella (No Results Available)	—

Bathing Waters Survey—1986 Results (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) Compliance with Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC): Coliform Standards

	Full Sampling and Analysis		*Partial Sampling and/or Analysis*		*No Sampling*	*Total*
	Pass	*Fail*	*Pass*	*Fail*		
Northumbrian Water Authority	7	7	2	3	0	19
Yorkshire Water Authority	18	3	0	0	1	22
Anglian Water Authority	15	2	5	6	0	28
Thames Water Authority	1	1	0	0	0	2
Southern Water Authority	32	5	9	19	0	65
Wessex Water Authority (South Coast)	9	2	15	1	0	27
South West Water Authority	78	24	0	1	0	103
Wessex Water Authority (Bristol Channel)	3	1	4	3	0	11
Welsh Water Authority	21	21	2	3	0	47
North West Water Authority	3	17	1	9	0	30
Northern Ireland Water Service	3	2	0	0	9	14
TOTALS	190	85	38	45	10	368

National Parks (Planning Applications)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to take account of the principles enunciated in the statement made by the Minister of State for Town and Country Planning in the House on 31 March 1949 on planning applications in national parks, known as the Silkin test, when considering

the appeal for planning permission by Mercury Communications Limited to construct a telecommunications mast at Arncliffe wood, Beacon hill in the north York moors national park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The statement to which the hon. Member refers related to mineral working in national parks. Our policy on this was set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) on 9 April 1987, at column *393-94*. On other types of development, our policy is that development control policies should be more stringent in national parks than in the countryside generally. This is reflected in the relevant structure plans which have been approved by my right hon. Friend and which, with the general policy, must be taken into account in individual cases wherever they are material considerations. The appeal to which the hon. Member refers will be determined on its merits, having regard to all the material considerations.

County Hall, Wakefield

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had discussions with the West Yorkshire residuary body about how much has been expended to date on the advertising for the sale of county hall, Wood street, Wakefield, West Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No. This is a matter for the West Yorkshire residuary body.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* for each local authority in England in order of magnitude *(a)* its increase in block grant from 1986-87 to 1987-88, in percentage terms, together with the entitlements for each year in £ millions, *(b)* its increase in total expenditure from 1986-87 to 1987-88 in percentage terms together with the expenditure figures for each year in £ millions and *(c)* its 1987-88 block grant as a percentage of its 1987-88 total expenditure, on the basis, in each case, of the 1986-87 figures used in the First Supplementary Report.

Mr. Chope: The information requested by the hon. Gentleman has been made available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 8 April, *Official Report*, column *257*, whether he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* figures on the same basis for the metropolitan districts and *(b)* figures on the same basis for the London boroughs excluding rate support grant for the Metropolitan police from both years.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 April 1987]: The figures requested at *(a)* have been placed in the Library. As explained in the notes to my answer of 8 April, *Official Report*, column *257*, in 1981-82 metropolitan police entitlements were paid direct to the rating authorities so the comparison sought at *(b)* is not possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent evidence he has that Nicaragua is supporting guerrilla movements in neighbouring countries.

Mr. Eggar: Nicaraguan leaders have advocated the spread of revolution to other Latin American states. We have no reason to doubt reports and complaints by neighbouring democratically elected Governments that Nicaragua supports guerrilla groups who have taken up arms against them.

Central America

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what stage the Contadora process in central America has now reached; and what further action Her Majesty's Government intend to take to help it to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Eggar: Contadora and Support Group Foreign Ministers recently expressed support for the Costa Rican peace proposals, as a means of restarting the Contadora negotiations, and for the summit of central American Presidents in Esquipulas, at which the proposals will be considered further. We and our European partners continue to urge all the countries of the region to persevere in their efforts to reach a negotiated solution.

Northern Ireland (Duty-free Goods)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the European Economic Community following the recent ban by the Republic of Ireland on purchases of duty-free goods in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland following its recent restriction on residents purchasing duty-free goods in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The restriction of duty-free allowances announced by the Irish Finance Minister on 31 March appears to be inconsistent with EC legislation. On 2 April, the Government accordingly asked the Commission what action it planned to take. On 14 April, the Commission indicated that it intended to open infraction proceedings against the Irish Government.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is continuing to monitor the situation regarding Oscar Rojas Cuellar, who disappeared on his return to Chile from the United Kingdom in 1981.

Mr. Eggar: Yes; but neither Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago nor the Chilean Vicaria de la Solidaridad human rights group has any fresh evidence about Senor Rojas' case.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Chilean Government on the case of Ledy Castro Urra, formerly employed at Exeter university and now detained without trial in Chile

Mr. Eggar: We have no formal standing to intervene with the Chilean Government on behalf of Senora Castro. However, we monitor her case closely and make clear to the Chilean authorities our concerns about continuing violations of human rights, as for example on 12 March when we supported a consensus resolution at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *592*, if he will now list the visits made by British diplomats to human rights organisations in Chile in 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Eggar: No central record of such visits is available. Her Majesty's embassy staff have frequent and varied contact with human rights organisations in Chile through visits and meetings, social encounters and telephone conversations.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make it his policy to seek assurances from the Chilean Government that exiles returning from the United Kingdom will not be subject to intimidation, imprisonment, torture or murder;

(2) if his Department intends to monitor the situation of exiles from Chile who have been resident in United Kingdom now returning to Chile.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago has already sought such assurances from the Chilean authorities. We shall monitor closely the experience of returning exiles, following the welcome removal of most names from the list of those officially banished. We shall also continue to press the Chilean Government for the full restoration of fundamental human rights.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has been approached over the past three months for advice from Chilean exiles resident in the United Kingdom who are considering returning to Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We have received two such approaches.

Human Rights

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many specific cases of human rights abuse he has raised with the Governments of *(a)* the Soviet Union, *(b)* Romania, *(c)* Poland, *(d)* Czechoslovakia, *(e)* East Germany and *(f)* Hungary in the last three years; and if he will list the names of the persons involved.

Mr. Renton: Several hundred human rights and personal cases have been raised with the countries concerned, though none with Hungary, over the past three years. Lists of such cases are not kept and could only be produced at a disproportionate cost.

Unitary Taxation

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he raised the subject of the implications for Anglo-United States relations of unitary taxation at his meeting with the Governor of California on Monday 13 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Unitary taxation was discussed during my right hon. and learned Friend's meeting with the Governor of California. The governor was told of our hopes for further reform of California's unitary taxation. He invited the United Kingdom private sector to put its views to the California franchise tax board.

Pakistan and Bangladesh

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the de-oxyribose nuclei acid pilot scheme now taking place in the sub-continent is being confined to Pakistan and Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: DNA testing in immigration cases is useful only if the claim depends on a parent-child relationship which is not proved by existing procedures. The only outstanding cases at the time of the pilot scheme involved people already in the United Kingdom, or these two countries. We recognise, however, that DNA testing is potentially of value in considering applications from other countries. Decisions on the incorporation of DNA testing into our immigration control procedures will be made in the light of the outcome of the pilot scheme.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present, nine meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for May.

The Fisheries Council will meet on 5 May and is likely to discuss annual catch quotas for the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation; fishing rights in the Svalbard region; fish import policy and EC aid for fisheries control facilities.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 11 May. It is expected that the agenda will include the Commission's recent proposals on the future financing of the Community, the reference framework for the 1988 Community budget, and directives on prospectuses to be published when securities are offered to the public and mutual recognition of listing particulars for admission of securities to official stock exchange listing.

The Education Council will meet on 14 May. The agenda is not yet available, but it is likely to include discussion of the ERASMUS student mobility programme.

The Health Council is to meet on 15 May. It will discuss the draft conclusions on appropriate use of medicinal products, implementation of the emergency health card, the Europe against cancer programme and AIDS.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 18/19 May to continue its discussions on the 1987 price-fixing proposals, which will include reviews of the green currency system and the oils and fats regime.

The Development Council will meet on 21 May to discuss public awareness of development issues, the implementation of Lomé 3, action against AIDS, environment and development and preparation for UNCTAD 7.

The Environment Council meets on 21 May. The agenda will include large combustion plants, vehicle emissions and leaded petrol, the export of dangerous chemicals, chlorofluorocarbons, the ACE programme of

community action relating to the Environment, and the discharge of dangerous substances in the aquatic environment.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 25-26 May. Discussions will cover the future financing of the Community; Community relations with Japan and the United States; progress of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations; moves towards closer co-operation between the EC and EFTA and relations with Latin America. A meeting of the EC/Tunisia Co-operation Council will also be held in the margins of the Council.

The Labour and Social Affairs Council will meet on 26 May. Ministers are expected to consider a decision on youth training, conclusions on adult training and a communication on protective legislation for women.

Western European Union

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of the Western European Union Foreign and Defence Ministers in Luxembourg on 27 April.

Mrs. Chalker: WEU Ministers at Luxembourg on 27-28 April held a useful exchange of views on subjects of concern to Europe in the security field. Our main focus was on East-West relations and arms control, particularly INF. We discussed the implications for security of Soviet proposals to eliminate intermediate-range systems down to a range of 500 km. Decisions on this question will be taken in the Alliance, but Ministers stressed that western security must continue to be based on an appropriate mix of conventional and nuclear forces which together provide a credible deterrent to aggression. They also agreed that the presence of United States nuclear forces and United States troops in Europe remains indispensible for the security of the whole alliance and that reductions in nuclear weapons would increase the importance of removing the conventional superiority of the Warsaw pact and eliminating chemical weapons. Ministers underlined that a successful outcome of the current East-West negotiations depends on the continued solidarity between Europe and the United States. On other matters, Ministers agreed that work should continue on the development of a set of principles for European security which should be examined at our autumn meeting, with a view to possible publication. Ministers approved further study of the WEU institutional structure, particularly that of the Paris agencies, including the question of possible co-location. They also held an informal exchange of views on the Assembly budget, and on WEU enlargement.

A copy of the communiqué of the meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure (Shropshire)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the expenditure per pupil in the local education authority area of the county of Shropshire for each year from 1978-79.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is given in the following table:

Net Institutional Recurrent Expenditure per Primary and Secondary Pupil

	Cash Terms (£)
1978-79	405
1979-80	465
1980-81	610
1981-82	705
1982-83	765
1983-84	825
1984-85	885
1985-86	945

Astronomy (South Africa)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many grants have been given to astronomers and to the institutions within which they work for visits to use telescopes in South Africa since the Science and Engineering Research Council suspended the agreement with the South African Government on joint management of the South African astronomical observatory.

Mr. Walden: The Science and Engineering Research Council has awarded five research grants to provide for seven United Kingdom observers to visit South Africa to use the telescopes since the agreement was suspended on 30 June 1986. The grants were awarded to four different universities.

School Governors (Meetings)

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision the Government have made for funding the cost of advertising of governors' meetings, provision of public facilities and production of reports for parents, including the cost of providing translations, where needed.

Mr. Dunn: The plans for local authority current spending on education for 1987-88 represent a cash increase of nearly 19 per cent. over those for last year. This level of provision should enable authorities to absorb without difficulty any additional expenditure arising from the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Freshwater Biological Association

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many staff have been made redundant both voluntarily and compulsorily by the Freshwater Biological Association in the last two years; what redundancies are proposed for the current financial year; and what percentage of the total staff each figure represents.

Mr. Walden: No compulsory redundancies have occurred at the Freshwater Biological Association (FBA) in the years 1986-87 and 1985-86. Two individuals took voluntary premature retirement in 1986-87 and five in 1985-86. The voluntary retirements represent 2·9 per cent. and 4·5 per cent. of the respective staff in post figures (104·5 1986-87 and 112 1985-86).

I understand that the FBA council has proposed that there should be losses of between 25 and 30 staff in the financial year 1987-88. This represents between 25·3 per cent. and 30·5 per cent. of the current staff in post figure of 98·5.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria are used by the Natural Environmental Research Council in deciding to reduce the grant-in-aid awarded to a particular research body; what weight the Natural Environment Research Council attaches to the ability of such bodies to attract commissioned research funding from the private and public sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The NERC policy for the allocation of funds between the various bodies which it supports is set out in the NERC corporate plan, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Current policy includes increasing the council's support of universities. The funding of all the council's institute and grant-aided associations is being reduced as a consequence.

NERC establishments are permitted to retain the whole of any commission research income earned and are encouraged to increase this source of funds.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to implement the commitment to environmental research, with particular reference to freshwater biology, expressed in its response to the World Conservation Strategy report, contained in the document "Conservation and Development — The British Approach"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what priority Her Majesty's Government attach within their overall research programme to research into freshwater biology, with particular reference to river management, pollution assessment and nature conservation; how this priority is reflected in the current and projected level of funding from Government sources for this area of research; what representations he has received about the level of funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Research into freshwater biology, with other environmental issues, is among a range of priority areas to be funded from within the resources available. Representations on this matter have been received from the staff of the Freshwater Biological Association.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the grant-in-aid from the Natural Environment Research Council to the Freshwater Biological Association in each of the last five years expressed at constant 1986-87 prices; what grant-in-aid is proposed for the current financial year and what percentage change this represents; and what information he has as to the proportion of its total funding which the Freshwater Biological Association attracted in the form of commissioned research from private and public sources in each of these years.

Mr. Walden: The information on the Freshwater Biological Association's grant-in-aid and its commissioned research income over the past five years expressed at 1986-87 prices, together with the commissioned research income (CRI) expressed in terms of the percentage of the total income, is as follows:

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Grant-in-aid (£,000)	1,634	1,724	1,595	1,622	1,955
CRI (£,000)	489	428	460	617	848
Total Income (£,000)	2,123	2,152	2,055	2,239	2,803
Percentage of CRI included in total income	23·0	19·9	22·4	27·6	30·3

The grant-in-aid for 1987-88 has yet to be finally decided, but it is expected to be about £1,443,000 at 1986-87 prices. This represents a reduction of 26 per cent. over the total grant-in-aid for 1986-87. However, the grant-in-aid for 1986-87 contained £300,000 for the net capital cost of the move of the culture collection of algae and protozoa from Cambridge to the FBA's Windermere station. After taking this into account, the reduction is 13 per cent.

Research

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many Medical Research Council projects have been funded in each of the last three years; and what is the extimate for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: The number of new project grants funded by the MRC has been as follows:

Academic year		
1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
473	440	439

The figure for the current award year 1986-87 will not be available until August. It is not possible to make estimates for future award years.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many Medical Research Council projects have been alpha-rated in each of the last three years; and what is the estimate for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: The number of new project grant applications alpha rated by the Medical Research Council has been as follows:

Academic year		
1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
672	527	529

The figure for the current award year 1986-87 will not be available until August. It is not possible to make estimates for future award years.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has of the number of researchers and scientists, previously involved in Medical Research Council funded projects, who left to work overseas in each of the last five years; and if he will provide a forecast for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Medical Research Council can only provide numbers of staff who have been employed by the council. Numbers of permanent scientific staff who have left to work overseas have been:

	Number
1982	3
1983	0
1984	3
1985	4
1986	2

It is not possible to forecast numbers for 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has of the number of researchers and scientists, trained from public funds, who left to work overseas in each of the last five years; and if he will forecast the numbers for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: This information is not collected centrally.

Student Grants

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement about the rates of allowance that will be payable to students in 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend announced the main rates of grant for 1987-88 on 30 January this year. Subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary regulations, the supplementary grant rates will be increased broadly in line with the main rates, and there will be certain other improvements in the grant arrangements.

Particular improvements include:

disabled students will be able to claim up to £700 for extra expenses: a rise of 24 per cent.;

for students claiming the older students' allowance, taxable benefits from periods of unemployment will count towards the £12,000 of earnings needed to qualify; and the qualifying figure of £12,000 set last year will not be increased;

students will be able to receive up to £2,000 a year from sponsorships or scholarships without any reduction in their grant.

The full list of rates and allowances has been placed in the Library.

Pupil Expenditure

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing expenditure per pupil since 1974-75 in *(a)* primary schools, *(b)* secondary schools and *(c)* special schools in cash terms and at constant prices.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The following table gives the information requested:

Net institutional recurrent expenditure per pupil, England
pounds per pupil

	Primary schools		*Secondary schools*		*Special education*	
Financial year	*Cash terms*	*Real terms*[1]	*Cash terms*	*Real terms*[1]	*Cash terms*	*Real terms*[1]
1974-75	200	680	320	1,080	n/a	n/a
1975-76	255	695	395	1,065	1,100	2,970
1976-77	290	695	440	1,050	1,290	3,070
1977-78	320	670	475	990	1,420	2,965
1978-79	365	690	530	1,000	1,635	3,090
1979-80	425	690	605	980	1,915	3,100
1980-81	545	740	765	1,045	2,435	3,320
1981-82	615	765	865	1,075	2,755	3,420
1982-83	680	785	940	1,090	3,055	3,535
1983-84	725	805	1,015	1,125	3,255	3,605
1984-85	760	810	1,085	1,155	3,560	3,780
1985-86[2]	805	805	1,175	1,175	4,035	4,035

[1] The cash terms for the earlier years have been repriced to 1985-86 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.
[2] Provisional.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir Maurice Oldfield

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will refer to the Security Commission recent allegations relating to the conduct of the late Sir Maurice Oldfield.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) on 23 April, at columns 656-57.

Council of Europe

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Prime Minister if she will announce the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will be meeting in Strasbourg from 4-8 May. I have appointed 18 delegates from the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The delegation this year will consist of 12 members of the Conservative party, five members of the Labour party and one member of the Liberal party. I have also appointed a number of substitute delegates.

The appointments of representatives and substitutes have been made on the basis of nominations by the Leaders of those parties concerned.

The same delegation will be representing the United Kingdom Parliament at the Assembly of the Western European Union.

Representatives from the Government Benches will be:

The right hon. Member for Torbay (Sir F. Bennett), who will act as leader.

The hon. Members for
Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg)
Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant)
Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins)
Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill)
Twickenham (Mr. Jessel)
Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight)
Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn)
Harrow, West (Sir J. Page)
Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith)
Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson)
and the Earl of Kinnoull.

Representatives from the Labour party will be:

The hon. Members for
Neath (Mr. Coleman)
Wallsend (Mr. Garrett)
Wentworth (Mr. Hardy)
East Kilbride (Dr. Miller)
and the Lord Hughes.

Representatives from the Liberal party will be:
The hon. Member for
Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross).

The following substitutes have been appointed to act as necessary on behalf of the delegates.

From the Government Benches:
The right hon. and learned Member for
Dover (Mr. Rees).
The hon. Members for:
Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie)
Northampton, South (Mr. Morris)
Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy)
Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes)
Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki)
Poole (Mr. Ward)
The Lord Newall and the Lord Rodney.

From the Labour party:
The right hon. Members for
Brent, East (Mr. Freeson)
Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan)
The hon. Members for
Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown)
Tooting (Mr. Cox)
Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Edwards)
Makerfield (Mr. McGuire)
Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry)
Hemsworth (Mr. Woodall)

From the Liberal party:
The Lord Mackie.

ENERGY

Nuclear Accidents (Compensation)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *361-2*, how many compensation claims have been received, how many have been paid, and what amount has been paid to *(a)* leukaemia victims and their families, *(b)* workers at nuclear installations and their families and *(c)* others, in respect of nuclear accidents or radiation leaks.

Mr. Goodlad: I apologise for the delay in answering. There have been no claims under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 resulting directly from a nuclear accident. Two claims have been submitted to the CEGB, one by a contractor's employee in respect of cancer, the other by one of the CEGB's own employees in respect of leukaemia. No compensation has been paid.

Nuclear Incidents

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the arrangements for reporting nuclear incidents; and whether all such incidents can be published.

Mr. Goodlad: During a debate on nuclear matters on 13 May last year, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), said that the Government would consider the existing reporting arrangements to see whether changes were desirable.

I am now able to announce new procedures which will extend the present arrangements, and will provide for the publication by the nuclear industry of reports of all occurrences, however minor.

Arrangements hitherto have required all incidents having significance, or potential significance, for the health and safety of the work force or the general public which are reported to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to be reported promptly to interested Departments and their Ministers. All such reports are published quarterly by the Health and Safety Executive. These formal reporting arrangements were explained to the House by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) on 26 July 1982. They are now being broadened, among other things, to require confirmed or expected breaches of discharge authorisations issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1969 to be included in the formal reporting arrangements and to be reported directly to interested Departments and their Ministers. I am placing a note on the revised reporting criteria in the Library of the House.

Nuclear operators are required to record in a site log or register all incidents, whether formally reportable or not, which occur at nuclear sites. Many such occurrences are already reported to Departments and are the subject of public statements. In future, nuclear operators will publish details of all such occurrences which are recorded in site logs, generally in weekly or fortnightly site newsletters. These local newsletters will be circulated to members of local liaison committees, to local Members of Parliament, to local news media and to interested Departments. Arrangements will also be made for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

These arrangements will ensure that the fullest possible information is made available at all times to the House and to the public about occurrences, however insignificant, at nuclear sites.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Envelopes

Mr. Speller asked the Lord Privy Seal, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Devon, North on 27 April, *Official Report*, column 15, if he will now list the representations he has received regarding the quality of franked brown manilla envelopes supplied for use in the House.

Mr. Biffen: I have received no representations regarding the quality of franked brown manilla envelopes but understand that, since the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee meeting on 19 May last year, two hon. Members have been in correspondence with the Serjeant-at-Arms about the matter.

WALES

National Health Service

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what were the numbers of medical and dental staff employed in the National Health Service in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985, expressed as actual numbers, and discounting changes in rota systems;

(2) what were the numbers of nurses and midwives employed in the National Health Service in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* in the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985, expressed as actual numbers, and discounting changes in rota systems;

(3) what were the numbers of front-line staff employed in the National Health Service in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* in the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985, expressed as actual numbers, and discounting changes in rota systems.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information which is only available in the form of whole-time equivalents, is given in the following table.

Average whole-time equivalents employed[1]

Period (six years inclusive)	*Medical and Dental*	*Nursing and Midwifery*	*Front-line staff*[2]
1970-75	1,675	[3]19,724	23,572
1975-80	2,064	[4]22,450	[4]27,878
1980-85	2,364	[4]25,847	[4]32,357

[1] Based on whole-time equivalents employed at 30 September each year.

[2] "Front-line staff" includes medical and dental, nursing and midwifery and professional and technical staff groups.

[3] Nursing and midwifery figures for 1970 are not wholly separable from professional and technical staff figures, and therefore the average is based on the five-year period 1971-75 inclusive.

[4] Figures for 1980 onwards have not been adjusted to allow for the reduction which took place in contract hours for nursing and midwifery staff, from 40 to 37½ hours per week.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales who will make the appointment of non-executive members of the Health Policy Board appointed on a non-representational basis referred to in the corporate management programme for the "Health Service in Wales" consultation paper; and who will qualify for appointment.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend appoints non-executive members to the board entirely at his discretion.

Hospitals

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many community hospitals are under construction at the present time in Wales;

(2) how many community hospitals are planned to be built in Wales *(a)* in the next five years and *(b)* in the next 10 years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: New community hospitals have been opened in Mold in 1984 and Ystradgynlais in 1986. None is currently under construction. I understand that currently district health authorities have plans for seven community hospitals in the next five years and a further four in the five years after that.

Health Policy Board

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the anticipated eventual capital costs in setting up the Health Policy Board for Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Nil.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the anticipated eventual revenue costs in setting up the Health Policy Board for Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Revenue costs directly attributable to the running of the Health Policy Board are confined to the fees and travel and other expenses of non-executive members. In 1986-87, this expenditure totalled £1,400. Welsh Office staff participate in board meetings and provide secretarial support in the normal course of their duties.

Health Common Services Authority

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the anticipated eventual capital costs in setting up the Welsh Health Common Services Authority:

(2) what are the anticipated eventual costs in operating the Health Welsh Common Services Authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No additional capital costs were incurred in establishing the Welsh Health Common Services Authority. The revenue allocation to the authority for financial year 1987-88 is £5·724 million. The revenue and capital costs incurred by the WHCSA in any financial year are attributable to the level of service it is required to provide for the NHS in Wales.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure on providing community care for mentally handicapped people in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* in the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985 expressed in actual and in 1975 adjusted terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information prior to 1975-76 is not separately identifiable for Wales. Between 1975-76 and 1979-80, expenditure was £22·83 million (£17·34 million at 1975-76 prices); between 1980-81 and 1984-85 expenditure was £52·34 million (£22·61 million at 1975-76 prices). These figures include expenditure on residential care for children and adults, day care at adult training centres, and the all-Wales mental handicap strategy. Figures for community health services and special education provision are not separately available.

Health Building, Bangor

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the present status of litigation in respect of health building schemes at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor with Hospital Design Consortium.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Official Referee has set the date of hearing in this action for April 1988.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the present status of litigation in respect of health building schemes at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor with Haden Young Ltd.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A preliminary issue in this action is to be heard in the High Court from 28 April 1987.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the terms of the settlement reached on the litigation arising from health building schemes at Prince Charles hospital.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Welsh Health Common Services Authority and the sub-contractor, CED Services Ltd., agreed to pay R. M. Douglas (Construction) Ltd.

£932,500 and £632,500 respectively, with each party bearing its own costs. Third party proceedings were withdrawn on the third parties' agreement to waive certain outstanding fees and to bear their own costs of the action.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the present status of litigation in respect of health building schemes at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor with IDC Ltd.

Mr. Mark Robinson: IDC Ltd. is a third party in a claim brought by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority against Haden Young Ltd. A preliminary issue in this action is to be heard in the High Court from 28 April 1987.

Mental Illness and Mental Handicap

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the adequacy of community care provision for hospital discharged mentally ill and mentally handicapped patients in each of the Welsh health authority areas.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In pursuance of its various policy initiatives directed towards the development of new patterns of care in the community, the Department consults and receives representations from a wide range of interests throughout Wales. It is not possible to give details without incurring disproportionate costs.

Consultant Posts

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultant posts in Wales have been unfilled for three months, six months and one year in each of the recognised specialties for each health authority in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not centrally available.

Small Farmers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions representatives of his Department have had with officials responsible for the common agricultural policy of the EEC concerning the possibility of a small farmers' direct income aid scheme; and what is his policy on such a scheme for small farmers in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Full consultations and discussions will take place once the Commission publish its formal proposals on direct income aids.

"A Good Old Age"

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the bodies and organisations with which he consulted prior to drawing up his consultation paper "A Good Old Age."

Mr. Mark Robinson: There was no formal consultation with any bodies or organisations before "A Good Old Age" was published; extensive consultation took place after publication.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he will make additional resources available to local authorities following the recent pay award to teachers.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am today laying before the House of Commons the Welsh rate support grant supplementary report 1987-88 which makes provision for additional expenditure by local authorities and for additional rate support grant in respect of the recent pay award to teachers.

DEFENCE

Pipeline Assembly Yard, Rosshire

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state his Department's current policy towards the proposed pipeline assembly yard at Morrich Mhor, near Tain, Rosshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My Department was approached in September 1985 by Land and Marine with a request to use a strip of land at the edge of the RAF range at Tain as the site for a pipeline assembly yard. My Department considered the proposals and was satisfied that by the application of stringent safety procedures the construction work could be accommodated as had been requested.

I understand that Land and Marine's application for planning permission is with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Defence Estate Steering Group

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the names and qualifications of the current membership of the Defence Estate Steering Group; what recommendations it has made as to the maximum utilisation of the defence estate since it was established in 1985; and what are its recommendations currently as to the disposal of surplus assets.

Mr. Freeman: The current membership of the Defence Estate Steering Group is as follows:

Ministry of Defence

Chairman:

Mr. Roger Freeman, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces.

Members:

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Armitage, Chairman of the Principal Administrative Officer Committee.
Mr. J. M. Stewart, Deputy Under Secretary (Personnel and Logistics).
Rear Admiral A. J. Richmond, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Logistics).
Captain R. J. Wright RN, Director of Quartering (Navy).
Brigadier M. A. Gardner, Director of Army Quartering.
Air Commander B. L. Robinson, Director of Organisation and Quartering (RAF).
Mr. R. P. Hatfield, Head of PL (Defence Lands).
Mr. P. A. Crowther, Head of Establishments and Research Administration 1.

Property Services Agency

Mr. H. P. Johnston, C Eng, MIEE, FCIBSE, Deputy Chief Executive 2, PSA.
Mr. M. D. Clarke, LLB, ARICs, Head of Defence Estate Services Division, PSA.
Mr. C. D. D. Duncan, Head of PL (Logistics).

The composition of the group recognises the need for a tri-service approach to the management of the defence estate whilst taking account of the executive responsibilities of each of the services and the Procurement Executive. Professional advice is provided by the Property Services Agency though the DESG is also empowered to seek advice from the private sector as it sees fit.

The first major project of the DESG was a study of the scope for rationalisation of defence facilities in north and

west London. As a result of this study, it has been decided to concentrate a number of Army and Air Force facilities on RAF Northolt and RAF Uxbridge, enabling the disposal of sites at Mill Hill, Stanmore Park, Hounslow, West Drayton and of service housing at Hendon and Mill Hill. As a second major project, the DESG commissioned a survey of 75 smaller but potentially valuable sites throughout the United Kingdom. The survey, which incorporated advice from outside consultants, was completed in 1986 and its recommendations are now being followed up in detail site by site. A number of sites are already in the process of disposal and it is expected that further disposals will result from this study during the next few years. In addition, the DESG has considered a number of individual cases, and sites at Camberley, Portsmouth, Brighton, Winchester and Arborfield have been disposed of or are in the process of disposal.

Defence Expenditure

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent in total on defence since 1979 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Total defence spending from 1979-80 to 1986-87 inclusive was the cash sum of about £117 billion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) hopes to reply to a letter from the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne, dated 25 February, on behalf of Mr. J. K. Miln, of Hard to Come By Farm, Budock, Falmouth.

Mr. Howard: I replied to my hon. Friend's letter on 29 April.

Bureaux de Change

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to regulate the amount of commission which may be charged by bureaux de change; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans for legislation to control the level of commission charges, but a code of practice issued by my Department early last year calls on banks and bureaux to display their commission and exchange rates prominently. Many banks and bureaux are already complying with these requirements, to which the Consumer Protection Bill, if enacted, will give statutory backing.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General (1) what has been the net gain or loss of jobs in the service sector since 1983 in *(a)* the north-west region, *(b)* Lancashire, *(c)* Greater Manchester, *(d)* Merseyside and *(e)* Cheshire;

(2) what has been the change in jobs in the manufacturing sector since 1983 in *(a)* the north-west region, *(b)* Lancashire, *(c)* Greater Manchester, *(d)* Merseyside and *(e)* Cheshire.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The latest estimates show an increase of 10,000 in the number of jobs in the north-west region between December 1983 and December 1986. This increase resulted from a net increase of 27,000 employees in the service industries; a net decrease of 40,000 employees in manufacturing industries; a net decrease of 8,000 employees in other industries and a net increase of 31,000 people in self-employment. Some of the apparent movement from manufacturing to service employment in these figures will be due to the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, computer services and road haulage previously done by manufacturers' own employees, now done by subcontractors outside the manufacturing sector.

Figures for counties and smaller areas are not available except from censuses of employment taken triennially since 1978.

Mr. Batiste asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the population between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age were *(a)* engaged in full-time education, *(b)* engaged in training, *(c)* in employment and *(d)* unemployed at the latest date for which records are available.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the form requested. In January 1986, of young people in Great Britain aged 16 to 18 on 31 August 1985, 31·2 per cent. were in full-time education, 10·4 per cent. were on YTS, and 15·4 per cent. were claimant unemployed. Most of the remaining 43 per cent. will have been in employment outside YTS. However, some will have been unemployed but not claiming benefit, some neither seeking work nor claiming benefit and some on Government schemes other than YTS.

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General (1) how many people have been unemployed for 12 months and more; if he will give the equivalent figure for May 1979; and if he will give the same information on the basis of the counting methods in use in May 1979 and the percentage increase in the latter case;

(2) if he will state the number unemployed for 12 months or more in *(a)* the west midlands, *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the Walsall travel-to-work area; what were the comparable figures for May 1979; and if he will give the same information on the basis of the counting methods in use in May 1979, and the percentage increase in the latter case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 8 January 1987, the latest date on which analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,334,430. The corresponding number of unemployed registrants in April 1979 (not available for May 1979) was 366,711. It is not possible to give a reliable estimate of long-term unemployment now on the method used in 1979.

For unemployment figures for the west midlands, the black country area of the west midlands and the Walsall travel-to-work area, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend on 19 February 1987 at column *769*.

Redundancies

Dr. David Clark asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report*, the number of redundancies notified to his Department in the South Shields constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: Information relating to confirmed redundancies is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in South Shields

Year	*Number*
1979	350
1980	735
1981	702
1982	1,369
1983	521
1984	1,531
1985	405
1986	537

Bureaux de Change

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received regarding the effects on the tourist industry and the numbers of visitors to the United Kingdom of overcharging by bureaux de change.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has received complaints about various practices adopted by certain bureaux de change operators and I recognise that a poor impression can be created for overseas visitors. The Government would not seek to control exchange rates or commission charges but we are concerned that these should be clearly displayed so that prospective customers are aware of the terms before they commit themselves. The British Tourist Authority introduced a voluntary code of practice in 1986 requiring prominent display of both rates and charges and this has been widely adopted. The proposed Consumer Protection Bill will include a statutory code of practice in this respect and a number of operators have already agreed to adhere to its proposed provisions on a voluntary basis in the meantime.

SCOTLAND

High Court (Jedburgh)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of occasions over the last 10 years when the High Court of the justiciary sat in Jedburgh.

Mr. Lang: Sittings of the High Court at Jedburgh over the last 10 years have been as follows:

	Number
1977	1
1978	3
1979	Nil
1980	Nil
1981	2
1982	4
1983	3
1984	1
1985	Nil
1986	Nil

Crime Statistics

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of persons convicted in each of the last 10 years of criminal offences in Scotland while on bail for an earlier offence.

Mr. Lang: The information below relates only to persons for whom reoffending while on bail was the charge which attracted the most serious penalty. In other cases, the offender will be classified under the actual crime committed while on bail and statistics on such offenders cannot be separately identified. Before 1983, reoffending while on bail was not distinguished from other bail offences.

Persons with main charge proved of reoffending while on bail—Scotland

	Number
1983	537
1984	462
1985	677
1986[1]	1,256

[1] Provisional

Criminal Assaults (Elderly People)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what practical steps he proposes to take to reduce the incidence of criminal assault on elderly people attacked while in their own homes.

Mr. Lang: A number of measures currently being taken to reduce the incidence of housebreaking and crime generally should help with this problem. Specific developments include *(a)* the recently launched campaign to promote neighbourhood watch, which is aimed at preventing housebreaking and vandalism by means of improved physical security, watchfulness and mutual help within the community, and *(b)* the national initiative by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission, under the community programme, to promote crime prevention projects, a specific aim of which is to provide the elderly, the disabled and the disadvantaged with practical improvements in home security. In addition, an architectural design competition is being held to encourage architects to incorporate good crime prevention and design features in housing developments. More generally, police forces are always ready to advise individual householders about appropriate security measures, use of which will reduce the opportunities for this type of crime.

Meningitis Research (Edinburgh)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding the Department of Health has been giving to meningitis research in Edinburgh in each of the last five years.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Home and Health Department has not funded any research projects relating to meningitis in this period.

Speed Limits

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, in how many cases he has rejected proposals submitted in the past 15 months from the Highland

regional council to impose speed limits where the environmental or accident criteria were met; and if he will give his reasons for refusing each application.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has not turned down any applications in the past 15 months from Highland regional council where both the environmental and accident criteria were met. Satisfaction of one of these criteria on its own is not a sufficient reason for imposing a speed restriction. In any case, there are three other criteria to be taken into account.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what consultations he has had with local authorities about the existing criteria for speed restrictions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations he has had with the police about the existing criteria for speed restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In 1979 a draft circular was issued for comment to several representative bodies, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland). Following these consultations, the Scottish Development Department issued circular No.18/80, which sets out the criteria.

Marine Farming

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what planning proposals he has to reduce potential conflicts of interest between marine farming and other fishing users of inshore waters.

Mr. Ancram: The Government do not consider that planning legislation would provide an appropriate framework for exercising control of sea-based fish farming developments. We do however recognise the need to ensure that the rapidly growing fish farming industry in Scotland is developed in a balanced and sensible way and that in its consideration of applications for leases the Crown Estate Commissioners takes account of both the needs of the industry itself and the views of others who could be affected by the overall growth of fish farming or by individual developments. A consultative paper containing proposals for new consultative procedures was issued by the Scottish Development Department in March 1986, and revised procedures were introduced last October. They will be kept under review and if significant changes are thought necessary the procedures will be further adjusted.

Unemployment

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what special initiatives to tackle unemployment have been set up by the Scottish Development Agency or other public authority in Scotland; what travel-to-work area(s) each covers; and what is the unemployment level in that area.

Mr. Lang: There are five major area initiatives currently in operation which were set up by the Scottish Development Agency in conjunction with local authorities and the private sector. These are at Clydebank, Coatbridge, Dundee, Inverclyde and Motherwell. While measures to tackle unemployment are a major component, the initiatives also have wider economic and environmental objectives. The travel-to-work areas covered by the initiatives and relevant unemployment rates are set out below.

Initiative	*TTWA*	*Unemployment rate (12 March) per cent.*
Clydebank	Glasgow	17
Coatbridge	Lanarkshire	21
Dundee	Dundee	16·2
Inverclyde	Greenock	20·3
Motherwell	Lanarkshire	21

Children's Panels

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the powers of the children's panels in relation to access to all relevant files on the children appearing before them, or their families; on whose discretion panel members are given access to such files; and what is the authority for this arrangement;

(2) for what purpose he introduced rule 13 on the conduct of children's panels relating to the custody of persons by police or prison officers; and on what date it became effective;

(3) for what reasons he did not reappoint to the children's panels in Ayrshire Mr. Alexander Baird and Mr. Ian Bigham; on what date this action became effective; and what representations he has received on this matter.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Housebuilding

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new private and local authority houses were constructed in *(a)* Cumnock and Doon Valley and *(b)* Kyle and Carrick in each year from 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table below:

Number of new buildings completed

Year	*Cumnock and Doon Valley district*		*Kyle and Carrick district*	
	Private	*Local Authority*	*Private*	*Local Authority*
1979	83	26	268	136
1980	62	47	173	119
1981	44	43	149	56
1982	50	6	107	17
1983	49	—	255	91
1984	77	14	305	35
1985	77	—	273	71
1986	58	2	187	28

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the waiting lists and waiting times for operations in each specialism in *(a)* Ballochmyle, *(b)* Ayr County, *(c)* Heathfield and *(b)* Seafield hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible, and will arrange for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the gross figures for those claiming unemployment benefit, and the percentage of the work force this represents for *(a)* Ayr travel-to-work area, *(b)* Cumnock and Sanquhar travel-to-work area and *(c)* Girvan travel-to-work area for each month since May 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Bypasses

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest expected dates of the various stages in the planning and construction of *(a)* Cumnock and Auchinleck, *(b)* New Cumnock, *(c)* Maybole and *(d)* Girvan bypasses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Scheme	Draft road orders published	Earliest possible works start
(a) Cumnock and Auchinleck Bypass	June 1986	Spring 1988
(b) New Cumnock Bypass	January 1987	Autumn 1988
(c) Maybole Bypass	Autumn 1987	Spring 1990

Start dates depend on completion of statutory and design procedures and on the availability of funds. In each case, construction is expected to take about two years.

The Scottish Development Department is still awaiting the results of a feasibility study into a Girvan bypass. I cannot at this stage say whether such a scheme would be justified.

Polychlorinated-biphenyls

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the outcome of the study commissioned by him into the background levels of polychlorinated-biphenyls and their derivatives in soil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Samples of soil have been taken on a 20 km grid from 36 locations between Girvan in the south-west and Stonehaven in the north-east. These samples have been analysed by the laboratory of the Government chemist for polychlorinated-biphenyls, polychlorodibenzo-p-dioxins and polychloro-dibenzo-furans.

Only four of the samples show a polychlorinated-biphenyl content above the limit of detection. The highest result, 100 parts per billion, is not exceptional having regard to the normal background levels in soils generally.

Few of the results for dioxins and furans are above the limit of detection, except for tetrachloro-dibenzo-furan, where most of the results are in the range of 0·01-0·06 parts per billion. Two results, of 0·1 and 0·4 parts per billion, have been found in samples from locations near Girvan and Coylton in Ayrshire. I have asked that further samples be taken from these locations for analysis.

The United Kingdom does not set a lim[illegible]dioxin levels; it is however of interest to note tha[illegible] United States centre for disease control has set a limit of 1·0 parts per billion in soil for the most toxic of the dioxins, 2378 tetrachloro-dibenzo-dioxin, in soil. None of the results obtained exceeds a hundredth of that figure.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, in the light of the reply of 10 April, *Official Report*, column *467*, to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) whether he is now in a position to make a further statement on the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Following discussion with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided to implement sections 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14 of the Act from 1 June 1987 and sections 4 and 8(1) from 1 October 1987. Further discussions will be held with the convention on the cost implications of section 13, with a view to implementing this section as well later in 1987-88.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veal Crates

Mr. Craigen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to bring forward the date for the phasing out of veal crates.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is considering representations from interested organisations on our proposal to phase out veal crates.

Agricultural Land

Dr. Cunningham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from organisations or individuals about the effect the Chernobyl fallout has had on the ability of people to sell agricultural land; what replies he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Representations have been recieved by me, or by my Department, from the Country Landowners Association, National Farmers Union and individuals about compensation for farms "blighted" because of the restrictions imposed following the Chernobyl accident.

All have been informed, or will be informed, that various factors are combining to make land prices weak at this time but that there is no reason why the sheep restrictions should place a farmer in a worse position than other farmers who wish to sell their property. In designing these restrictions we have sought to ensure that farmers are able to carry out their normal husbandry so far as possible, and compensation arrangements designed to cover market losses on marked sheep and certain direct losses resulting from the impact of the restrictions were introduced. The arrangements to allow sheep to move from restricted farms and associated compensation arrangements should ensure that farmers suffer no significant loss in the operation of their businesses. In these circumstances there ought not to be any loss in the capital value since the farm's earning potential is not affected and its normal husbandry practices are not impeded.

Food (Dyes)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy that no dyes be added to food intended for children aged one to three years; what steps he has taken to ensure that food manufacturers do not add dyes in such food; and what penalties are involved in the event of dyes being added.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have already circulated proposals to amend the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973 so as to provide inter alia that:

"No food specially prepared for babies and young children shall have in it or on it any added colouring matter other than any of the following added permitted colouring matters:

Riboflavin or Lactoflavin E 101
Riboflavin-5'-phosphate
beta Carotene E160(a)."

The proposals do not define "young children" so as to avoid limiting the extent of the prohibition.

The riboflavins and beta-Carotene would be permitted because they are valuable vitamins or vitamin sources which also have colouring characteristics.

Persons contravening the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations are liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £2,000.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting held in Luxembourg on 27-28 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I represented the United Kingdom at this Council, which was devoted entirely to a further discussion of the Commission's proposals for agricultural prices and support measures for 1987-88. There remains considerable divergence between member states' views on a number of crucial issues, including the degree of price restraint to be applied, agrimonetary measures and the proposed tax on oils and fats. I took the opportunity to make clear that I would be looking for a green pound devaluation larger than that proposed by the Commission.

The Council will resume its discussions on 18 May.

Fishing Industry

Sir Michael Shaw asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when Fisheries Ministers have decided on new schemes for providing financial assistance to the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Following consultation with representatives of the fishing industry, my right hon. Friends and I are proceeding with the preparation of national schemes to implement the main provisions of EC regulation 4028/86 which was agreed by the Council of Fisheries Ministers at the end of last year. Orders under the Fisheries Act 1981 will be laid before Parliament shortly with a view to them coming into operation at the beginning of June. The orders will continue schemes for grants to assist vessel construction and modernisation, and the development of aquaculture, and to provide a limited measure of support for exploratory voyages and joint ventures. We do not, however, propose to continue with schemes for the decommissioning or laying-up of vessels, our view being that the limited financial resources available should at this stage be directed towards the modernisation of the fleet. With this in mind, priority under the new scheme will be given to vessels replacing those lost, urgent modernisation, and the replacement of vessels over 15 years of age.

Rates of grant available to vessels of less than 33m will generally be at the maximum rate of 30 per cent. permitted by the Council regulation, subject to the maximum grant payable in respect of any vessel being £250,000. However, in the case of applications for vessels over 24m from Northern Ireland and the west of Scotland, which also receive a grant from EC funds, the national grant will be abated so that the combined rate of grant received by such vessels in those areas exceeds that elsewhere by no more than 5 per cent. This will help to ensure that the financial advantage provided for in the Council regulation is principally for the benefit of local vessels. Rates of grant for larger vessels, greater than 33m in length, will be generally 10 per cent., subject again to a maximum of £250,000 for any one vessel. The detailed rates of grant for vessels up to 33m are set out in the annex.

These measures will continue the process of the adaptation of the fleet to future fishing opportunities and will concentrate grant aid where it is most needed.

Proposed rates of grant in the West of Scotland, Northern Ireland and other regions (per cent.)

	Community Aid	*National Aid*	*Potential Combined Aid*
	Vessels under 24 metres		
West of Scotland and Northern Ireland	35	30	65
Other regions	20	30	50
	Vessels 24 metres and over up to 33 metres		
West of Scotland and Northern Ireland	35	[1]20/30	55
Other regions	20	30	50

[1] 30 per cent. if no Community aid.

Note—The total amount of grant under the national scheme, payable in respect of a vessel under the same ownership, will be limited to £250,000.

Fisheries Policy

Mr. Pollock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Fisheries Ministers have completed their review of the restrictive licensing arrangements for pressure stocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Fisheries Ministers have thoroughly reviewed the restrictive licensing arrangements for pressure stocks which were originally introduced in 1984 for an initial three-year period. We have taken full account of the views expressed by the main organisations representing the fishing industry and of our experience of managing United Kingdom fisheries within the framework of the common fisheries policy as well as of the prospects for the years immediately ahead so far as these can be discerned.

Ministers have concluded, with the broad support of the fishing industry, that, given the likelihood of continuing pressure on the United Kingdom quotas for at least the 32 stocks currently designated as pressure stocks, the system of restrictive licensing for pressure stocks should continue and that certain steps should be taken to ensure that the system imposes greater restraints that

hitherto on the growth of effective fishing capacity. We are, however, conscious that measurement of effective fishing capacity is a complex matter, involving a variety of factors and reflecting differences between different categories of vessel, and that no reliable measures of effective fishing capacity applicable to the United Kingdom fleet are currently available. We have accordingly decided to set in hand, in consultation with the industry, further work on this aspect.

In the meantime, we have decided that the further restriction on the transfer of pressure stock licences by reference to vessel length already introduced last November in respect of the area VII whitefish pressure stocks should now be made applicable to pressure stocks generally. Consequently, as from today, pressure stock licences will not be transferable from a vessel under 80 ft. in registered length to a vessel of 80 ft. or over. This restriction will apply in addition to the existing restriction on transfers from vessels under 40 ft. to vessels of 40 ft. or over and will thus create a system of three length bands for the purposes of pressure stock licensing. Consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis, in the light of the overall objective, to cases where the immediate application of this additional restriction would cause hardship as a result of financial commitments already entered into.

We have decided that, further to the measure announced earlier this year to withdraw pressure stock licences from inactive vessels, provision needs to be made on a continuing basis to prevent the licences of inactive or obsolete vessels being made available for transfer and thus increasing the effective capacity of the fleet. The details of such a provision will be the subject of further consultation with the industry.

When the restrictive licensing arrangements were introduced in 1984, provision was made on an exceptional basis for persons who were at that time "between boats", including owners of shipwrecked vessels, to be granted pressure stock licences for replacement vessels; provision was also made for owners of under 10m vessels with a record of pressure stock fishing in 1983-84 to be able to obtain a pressure stock licence for a replacement vessel of over 10m and under 40 ft. We consider that these two derogations, which were essentially of a transitional nature, have now served their purpose and should cease with effect from 1 January 1988.

We have also reviewed the additional special licensing restrictions, introduced in July 1985, applying to beam trawlers in area VII and have concluded that, in view of the continuing pressure on the quotas, particularly for sole and plaice in area VII, these restrictions should remain in force. We have, however, concluded that to assist owners of smaller beam trawlers in need of replacement a strictly limited element of relaxation can be allowed without jeopardising the overall purpose of the restrictions. We will therefore permit beam trawlers replacing existing licensed vessels in the under 80 ft category to exceed the registered length of the existing vessel by a margin of up to 10 ft, provided that the replacement vessel itself remains under 80 ft: to permit this relaxation to be effective the tonnage restriction will not apply in these cases, but the engine power of the replacement vessel will continue to be restricted to that of the existing vessel.

The additional special licensing restrictions applying to purse-seiners and freezer trawlers in the pelagic fisheries will remain in force on the basis announced earlier this year.

Ex-Spanish Fishing Vessels

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many ex-Spanish fishing vessels are now on the British register; and what was the total on 1 January.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 April 1987, c. *24*]: Out of some 15,000 fishing vessels registered in the United Kingdom, 50 are ex-Spanish fishing vessels. A further 70 United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels formerly in British ownership are believed now to be beneficially owned in large part by Spanish interests.

At 1 January 1987, 50 ex-Spanish vessels had United Kingdom registration in addition to 49 other vessels which were believed to be beneficially owned largely in Spain.

EC (Food Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the price at which butter, beef and sugar, respectively, were made available to traders, after the payment of export refund, to the Soviet Union, expressed in pound sterling per pound, at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 April 1987, c. *698*]: The most recent sale of butter to the USSR was on 15 April. None was sold from the United Kingdom. Had any sales taken place from the United Kingdom the price to United Kingdom traders would have been nearly 20p per lb.

The most recent prices in sterling terms at which beef would have been made available to United Kingdom traders for sales to the USSR are:

bone-in forequarters—29p per lb.
bone-in hindquarters—45p per lb.
boneless cuts—38p to 56p per lb depending on the cut.

No sales have taken place from the United Kingdom for over a year.

The last export tender competition for sugar intervention stocks took place on 21 January. The free-on-board price was equivalent to around 7p per lb. There are currently no intervention stocks of sugar held in the United Kingdom.

Those prices are inclusive of export refunds and United Kingdom MCAs where applicable; the prices at which sales to the USSR are concluded are a matter for the traders concerned.

Tied Cottages

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications by landlords for repossession under the terms of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976, of an agricultural tied cottage there have been since the Act came into force; and how many alleged offence under section 28(11) and 28(14) of that Act there have been, together with details of the number of prosecutions subsequently brought, and the average fine imposed.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 April 1987]: I regret that the information sought in the first part of the hon. Member's question is not kept centrally in the form requested. However, the following table shows the number of requests for agricultural dwelling house advisory committees (ADHACs) received in England since the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 came into operation.

Number of requests for ADHACs received 1976-86 in England

Year	Number
1976	n/a
1977	920
1978	876
1979	937
1980	711
1981	639
1982	644
1983	620
1984	567
1985	567
1986	496
Totals	6,977

Responsibility for prosecutions under section 28(11) and 28(14) of the Act lies with the housing authorities.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Care in the Community

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, columns *652-3*, he will publish information available to him as to how many *(a)* mentally ill, *(b)* mentally handicapped and *(c)* elderly people have been discharged from hospitals on a regional health authority basis under the care in the community programme for each year since it was introduced.

Mrs. Currie: A breakdown by regional health authority of the figures supplied in my earlier reply is given in the table.

Discharges[1] from mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England after durations of stay of 5 years or more

	Mental illness			Mental handicap		
	1983	1984	1985	1983	1984	1985
England	821	971	986	967	1,375	1,522
Northern	44	48	48	24	63	58
Yorkshire	55	74	67	44	71	148
Trent	53	102	105	77	129	150
East Anglian	28	32	29	67	58	66
North West Thames	70	96	65	54	50	65
North East Thames	71	76	76	35	72	83
South East Thames	45	75	70	87	148	200
South West Thames	68	65	59	96	119	171
Wessex	45	53	67	85	82	75
Oxford	20	34	39	38	38	57
South Western	135	97	110	111	304	155
West Midlands	86	117	113	115	70	99
Mersey	55	65	81	66	98	72
North Western	45	46	56	68	73	123
Special Health Authority	1	1	1	0	0	0

[1] Excludes transfer to other NHS hospitals and Special Hospitals.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in 1987 from *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* other people, concerning the timetable for implementing the full provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: 216 representations have been received from hon. Members and 15 from other people or organisations since the beginning of 1987 about the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. The majority of these have been concerned with implementation.

Tattoos

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for each health authority what is the average waiting time for an operation to remove a tattoo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. It is not held centrally.

Hospitals

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the costing returns submitted by health authorities in England showing total current expenditure on hospitals categorised as pre-convalescent and convalscent for each year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Social Service Departments

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the extent to which each local authority social service department is currently below its grant-related expenditure allocation; and how large a penalty they will incur in each case if they reach their grant-related expenditure allocation.

Mr. Newton: We do not collect information in a way which would enable valid comparisons to be made between individual authorities' actual expenditure on the personal social services and the relevant grant-related expenditure allocation levels. GREs for individual services are not designed as a basis for budget setting, but in aggregate with GREs for other services represent an assessment of the cost to each authority of providing a common standard of service, allowing for differences in the characteristics and needs of the different areas. It is for local authorities to determine spending on particular services in the light of their priorities and particular financial circumstances.

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate, for the year 1986-87, what the hospital and community health services gross current expenditure percentage change was after National Health Service pay and prices; and what was the percentage increase in demographic demand for that year.

Mr. Newton: Outturn expenditure figures for 1986-87 are not yet available.

Research Budget

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply of 20 March to the hon. Member for Caernarfon, *Official Report*, columns 671-72, on his Department's research budget, he now intends to make an increase in his Department's research budget to meet the pay settlement for university research staff.

Mr. Newton: The implications of the pay settlement for non-clinical academic staff for the Department's research programme are still under consideration.

Sick Pay

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the statutory sick pay of a person currently earning £75 per week who is in receipt of statutory sick pay for the first time this week; what would have been his statutory sick pay had such a person been taken sick in March 1987 or been eligible for statutory sick pay that month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS Property (Norwich)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all National Health Service property within the Norwich health authority district stating acreage and value in each case and also giving the overall acreage and value.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 22 April 1987, c. 626]: The individual and total acreages of all the major properties held by the Norwich district health authority are set out as follows. In addition, the authority is responsible for a large number of much smaller sites currently used for such purposes as health centres, clinics and residential accommodation for staff.

	Acreage
Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, Norwich, Norfolk.	17·71
Whitlingham Hospital, Trowse-with-Newton, Norfolk.	8·40
Wayland Hospital, Attleborough, Norfolk.	9·71
Colman Hospital, Unthank Road, Norwich.	5·98
West Norwich Hospital & Chest Clinic, Bowthorpe Rd., Norwich.	20·91
Drayton Hall Maternity Home, Drayton, Norfolk.	8·27
Dereham Hospital, East Dereham, Norfolk.	14·50
Hellesdon Hospital, Hellesdon, Norwich, Norfolk.	64·68
Hellesdon Hospital, David Rice, Hellesdon, Norwich, Norfolk.	35·78
Bethel Hospital, Bethel Street, Norwich, Norfolk.	1·21
The Vale Hospital, Swainthorpe, Norfolk.	23·47
St. Andrews Hospital, Thorpe St. Andrew, Norfolk.	155·39
Eaton Grange, 378, Unthank Road, Norwich, Norfolk.	1·50
Hales Hospital, Heckingham, Norfolk.	10·11
Little Plumstead Hospital, Little Plumstead, Norfolk.	125·42
Cromer & District Hospital, Cromer, Norfolk.	3·70
North Walsham War Memorial Cottage Hospital, Norfolk.	6·90
St. Michael's Hospital, Aylsham & District War Memorial Cottage Hospital, Aylsham, Norfolk.	17·76
Kelling Hospital, Kelling & Holt, Norfolk.	31·98
Pine Heath Hospital, Bodham, Norfolk.	11·76
Fletcher Hospital, Cromer, Norfolk	6·23
Mundesley Hospital, Gimingham, Trunch & Mundesley.	24·18
Wells & District Hospital, Wells, Norfolk.	1·71
	607·26

TRANSPORT

Search-and-rescue Helicopter

Mr. Mackenzie asked the Secretary of State for Transport what, pursuant to his answer of 23 April, *Official Report*, column 684, is the range, carrying capacity and auto-hover capability of the new search-and-rescue helicopter to be based at Stornoway.

Mr. Moore: The aircraft to be based at Stornoway will be similar to the Sikorsky S61N Mark II provided under contract to the Department of Transport by Bristow Helicopters Ltd. for search and rescue (SAR) and based at Sumburgh, Shetland Isles. This aircraft is among the most advanced SAR helicopters in service anywhere. It will have full auto-hover and infra red detection capabilities. Its range and carrying capacity are largely interdependent and related to the aircraft weight including fuel at take-off and any time thereafter. In general, the aircraft should be capable of recovering about 15 survivors at a range of 150 nautical miles and returning to base.

However, until the Stornoway aircraft can be fully fitted out and to achieve the earliest possible operational date for the Hebrides base, a standard S61N is being provided in early May as an interim measure. The aircraft will have normal SAR capability but only limited effectiveness at night.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

1. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding his policy towards inflation.

Mr. Lawson: The Government's success in bringing down inflation has been widely welcomed.

48. **Sir John Farr** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average rate of inflation for the past two years; and how this compares with the figures for the period 1977 to 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The average rate of inflation for the past two years has been 4·1 per cent. at an annual rate. This compares with an average of 12·5 per cent. over the period 1977 to 1979.

Unemployment (Scotland)

2. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will prepare an estimate of the effect of the Budget on present levels of unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. MacGregor: The Budget continues the Government's policies creating a vigorous and expanding economy which is the surest route to increasing employment in all parts of the country, including Scotland. The reduction in taxation which my right hon. Friend announced improves incentives, and, if reflected in lower pay settlements, will make it easier for employers to take more people on. The reduction in borrowing maintains the conditions which have allowed inflation to fall to levels not seen for two decades, and which create an environment where industry can invest and enterprise can flourish.

Small Businesses (VAT)

4. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about his Budget proposals for help for small businesses over value added tax accounting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The measures contained in my right hon. Friend's Budget Statement have been warmly welcomed.

Exchange Rate

11. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the present level of the exchange rate of the pound.

Mr. Lawson: The sterling index at noon today stood at 73·2.

Opposition Parties Policies (Costs)

12. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what resources are employed by Her Majesty's Treasury in costing spending programmes proposed by Her Majesty's Opposition.

38. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what resources are employed by the Treasury in costing spending programmes proposed by Her Majesty's Opposition.

Mr. MacGregor: No additional resources are employed in the costings.

24. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will prepare estimates of the cost of the programmes announced by the Opposition parties.

43. **Mr. Hind** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will prepare estimates of the cost of the programmes announced by the Opposition parties.

52. **Mr. Forth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will prepare estimates of the cost of the programmes announced by the Opposition parties.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims).

Budget Proposals (Unemployment)

19. **Dr. Godman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the effect of the Budget on the latest level of unemployment.

20. **Mr. Evans** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding his estimate of the effect of his Budget measures on the level of unemployment in Britain.

Mr. MacGregor Unemployment has fallen by 180,000 over the past eight months and my right hon. Friend's Budget will maintain the conditions which enabled this welcome fall to occur.

Payroll Giving

21. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the response to the new payroll giving schemes.

23. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a further statement about the implementation of payroll giving schemes.

Mr. Ian Stewart I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) earlier today.

Economic Growth

22. **Mr. Philip Oppenheim** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what detailed information he has as to how his forecast of growth in the British economy in 1987 compares with expected growth in other major economies.

Mr. Lawson: I expect the United Kingdom economy to grow by 3 per cent. in 1987. The latest IMF forecasts indicate that this will be a higher rate of growth than in any other major industrial country.

28. **Mr. Forman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what detailed information he has as to how his forecast of growth in the British economy in 1987 compares with expected growth in other major economies.

29. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what detailed information he has as to how his forecast of growth in the British economy in 1987 compares with expected growth in other major economies.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim).

31. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent estimate of the underlying growth rate of the British economy.

58. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent estimate of the underlying growth rate of the British economy.

59. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent estimate of the underlying growth rate of the British economy.

Mr. MacGregor: Measured at 1980 prices, the average estimate of gross domestic product at factor cost is provisionally estimated to have risen by ¾ per cent. in the year to the fourth quarter of 1986.

Local Authority Expenditure

25. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to revise his estimates of public expenditure in 1987-88 in the light of budgets announced by local authorities.

32. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to revise his estimates of public expenditure in 1987-88 in the light of budgets announced by local authorities.

35. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact on the economy of the level of local authority rates and spending now announced for 1987-88.

40. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to revise his estimates of public expenditure in 1987-88 in the light of budgets announced by local authorities.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

Unemployment

26. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the matter raised in his reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye concerning the average per capita cost per annum of unemployment in that constituency as calculated by the unemployment unit.

Mr. MacGregor: I have nothing to add to the letter which I have sent the hon. Member. The estimates of benefit expenditure are consistent with those given to the House on previous occasions, but include housing benefit, which can be paid to people in work. The estimates of revenue foregone are so over-simplified as to be meaningless.

37. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will prepare an estimate of the total cost of unemployment to the Exchequer.

44. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will prepare an estimate of the total cost of unemployment to the Exchequer.

Mr. MacGregor: The latest estimate of the cost of unemployment and supplementary benefit which will be paid to the unemployed in 1987-88 is £6·05 billion. In addition, it is estimated that £1·3 billion will be paid in housing benefit, a benefit which can continue to be paid if the recipient finds employment. It is not possible to estimate the revenue forgone.

Profit-Related Pay

27. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has received to the proposals for profit-related pay announced in his Budget.

30. **Mr. Bright** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has received to the proposals for profit-related pay announced in his Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to my hon. Friend the Member for Glandford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet).

Hospital Broadcasting (VAT)

33. **Mr. Ancram** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations regarding the zero-rating of value added tax on its equipment purchases.

Mr. Brooke: I have received no representations directly from the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations. My colleagues and I have, however, received about 90 letters from local hospital radio organisations and their members.

Economic Performance

34. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the recent performance of the economy.

47. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the performance of the economy.

57. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the performance of the economy.

62. **Mr. Watts** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the performance of the economy.

Mr. MacGregor: The marked improvement in the United Kingdom's performance on productivity, growth and inflation, leading to the generation of over one million new jobs since June 1983, has been widely recognised and welcomed.

Payroll Giving

36. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a further statement about the implementation of payroll giving schemes.

45. **Mr. Conway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the response to the new payroll giving schemes.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford on Avon (Mr. Howarth) earlier today.

Interest Rates

39. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

42. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on United Kingdom interest rates.

55. **Mr. Latham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the recent movement of interest rates.

60. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the level of interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Bank base rates are 9½ per cent.

61. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how current interest rates in the United Kingdom compare with similar rates in the United States of America, West Germany, France and Japan.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the United Kingdom, just as in the other G5 countries, interest rates are held at the level necessary to maintain appropriate monetary conditions.

Bank Lending

41. **Mr. Adams** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the present levels of bank lending.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The latest published figures are those for the end of December 1986, at which time banks' sterling lending outstanding to the non-bank private sector was around £170 billion.

Consumer Spending

46. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the present levels of consumer spending.

Mr. MacGregor: Consumers' expenditure is forecast to grow at around 4 per cent. in real terms in 1987.

Value Added Tax

49. **Mr. Harrison** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to extend the base of value added tax.

Mr. Lawson: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary.

66. **Mrs. Ree** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were total value added tax revenues in 1985-86; and what is the latest estimated outturn for 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke: VAT revenue for 1985-86 was £19,331·4 million. The latest estimate for 1986-87 is £21,500 million.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

50. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast outturn for the public sector borrowing requirement for 1986-87.

Mr. MacGregor: The public sector borrowing requirement for 1986-87 is provisionally estimated at £3·3 billion, between ¼ and 1 per cent. of GDP.

Unemployment (Cost)

51. **Mr. Parry** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on his policy towards providing regional estimates of the cost to the Exchequer of unemployment in the light of the study on the subject by Sinfield and Fraser of Edinburgh University, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. MacGregor: No. Although the study to which the hon. Gentleman refers uses estimates of benefit expenditure which are consistent with those given to the House on previous occasions, they include housing benefit which can be paid to people in work. The estimates of revenue forgone, however, are so over simplified as to be meaningless.

Personal Equity Plans

53. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest estimates of the full year cost of the personal equity plans.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost of the tax reliefs for personal equity plans will depend on the number of plans, the amounts invested, and the performance of the equities held. Costs in 1987-88 are expected to be about £25 million. Costs will build up in future years as investors take out more plans.

Council of Finance Ministers

54. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when is the next meeting of European Economic Commission Finance Ministers.

64. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the items he proposes to discuss at his next meeting with his counterparts in the European Economic Community Finance Council.

Mr. Brooke: The next meeting of the EC Council of Economic and Finance Ministers is on 11 May. It is expected that the agenda will include the Commission's recent proposals on the future financing of the Community the reference framework for the 1988 Community budget; the directive on prospectuses to be published when securities are offered to the public; and an amendment to the directive on mutual recognition of listing particulars for admission of securities to official stock exchange listing.

Research and Development

56. **Mr. Strang** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Government spent on research and development in 1986; and what proportion this represented of total Government expenditure.

Mr. MacGregor: Details of Government spending on research and development are contained in the 1986 annual review of Government-funded research and development which is published by HMSO. The information is available for financial years only and the estimated outturn for 1985-86 for total Government spending on research and development is £4,582·1 million which represents about 4·6 per cent. of central Government expenditure.

Income Tax and National Insurance

63. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of his gross earnings a single person earning half average industrial earnings will be paid out in income tax and national insurance contributions as a result of the Budget proposals; and how this compares with 1986-87 and 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information for a single person on half average male, full-time manual earnings is as follows:

	Gross Earnings £ per week	*Income tax and NIC per cent.*
1978-79	42·40	22·0
1986-87	90·30	21·6
1987-88	96·15	20·9

The earnings figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are provisional and are calculated by assuming increases of 7½ and 6½ per cent. respectively over the previous year (in accordance with the assumptions given to the Government Actuary for reviewing national insurance contributions in the autumn statement). It is assumed that national insurance contributions are paid at contracted in rates and that the only tax relief or allowance available to the taxpayer is the single person's allowance.

Manufacturing Industry

65. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the wealth-producing sector of the economy was represented by manufacturing industry for each of the last eight years.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested can be derived from table 2.1 or table 3.7 of the 1986 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts" (the CSO "Blue Book"), a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

67. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it remains his policy to allow mortgage tax relief to individuals purchasing houses.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government have made it clear on many occasions that they have no intention of abolishing mortgage interest relief.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what he ascribes the difference between the 1986 Budget estimate and the latest estimate of the revenue from stamp dutis in 1986-87; and if he will break down the figures in table 6B.3 of the financial statement and Budget report 1987-88 to show where the latest estimate diverged from the original forecast and where the forecast for 1987-88 differs from the latest estimate for 1986-87.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The difference can be ascribed mainly to increased turnover and prices in the property and stock markets. The breakdown of the figures requested is as follows:

(£ million)

	1986-87		*1987-88*
	Budget	*[1]Outturn*	*Forecast*
Land and buildings	605	710	875
Shares	590	850	890
Other duties	230	290	310
TOTAL (rounded)	1,430	1,850	2,100

[1] Latest estimate.

Ministers (Tax Affairs)

Mr. Canavan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any guidance has been given to Inland Revenue staff about handling requests from Ministers for advice about their own tax affairs.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No special guidance has been given. Ministers have the same rights as other taxpayers to receive assistance from the Inland Revenue in relation to their own tax affairs.

Controller of Stamps (Legal Advice)

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when the legal advice to which the Controller of Stamps referred in his letter of 19 February to Messrs Mosley, Chapman and Skemp, solicitors of Bore Street, Lichfield, for Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Keay of 13 Wissage road, Lichfield will be available;

(2) what are the reasons for the delay in conveying the definite decision on the stamp duty position as mentioned in the final paragraph of the Controller of Stamp's letter to Messrs Mosley, Chapman and Skemp, dated 2 November 1985 (ref: ADJ/45201/85/EMS);

(3) if he will make a statement setting out the reasons why the Controller of Stamps (Adjudication Section) at West Block, Barrington Road, Worthing, West Sussex has not resolved the matter first raised in a letter sent by Messrs Mosley, Chapman and Skemp, solicitors, of Lichfield, on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Keay of 13 Wissage Lane, Lichfield in respect of stamp duty on a property transaction on 22 November 1985.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The delay has been due to the need for the Inland Revenue to take legal advice on this and a number of other similar cases. The Revenue hopes to be able to deal with the matter shortly.

Aviation Fuel (Iran)

Mr. Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will investigate the circumstances in which the oil tankers Paula Maersk and Ambio Fingo left Milford Haven laden with aviation fuel and ended up at Iran's Hormuz terminal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Unearned Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the annual saving to the Exchequer from unearned income paid abroad if the tax credit was raised from 27 per cent. to 35 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Building Societies

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will introduce legislation to prevent the building societies from relying on a disclaimer in mortgage applications to avoid liability to purchasers of property for negligence on the part of the societies' own surveyor.

Mr. Howard: I have been asked to reply.
I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Isle of Man

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution the Isle of Man makes to the Exchequer to cover the cost of services provided for it.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 April 1987]: The Isle of Man makes an annual contribution towards the cost of defence and other common services provided by the United Kingdom Government which in 1985-86, the last

year for which figures are available, amounted to £1,004,166. The island also makes contributions in kind, notably the provision of military training facilities and a bombing range for the RAF; and pays the full costs of certain specific services for its residents, notably the provision of higher education and the accommodation of long-term prisoners (currently 10 in number).

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 1 May 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the schools which have *(a)* over 20 per cent., *(b)* over 30 per cent. and *(c)* over 40 per cent. of their pupils paid for under the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested for the school year 1986-87 is as follows:

(a) Schools with 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. of their pupils paid for under the assisted places scheme (APS)

Alleyns School, Dulwich
Belvedere School, Liverpool
Birkenhead High School
Birkenhead School
Bristol Cathedral School
Bury Grammar School (Boys)
Carmel College, Wallingford
Churcher's College, Petersfield
Colfe's School, London
Dame Allan's Boys' School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Dame Allan's Girls' School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Denstone College, Uttoxeter
Edgehill College, Bideford
Exeter School
Friends School, Saffron Walden
Godolphin and Latymer School, London
Hulme Grammar School (Boys), Oldham
Hulme Grammar School (Girls), Oldham
King Edward VI High School, Birmingham
King Edward VII School, Lytham
King Edward VI School, Southampton
King's High School for Girls, Warwick
Kingston Grammar School
La Sagesse Convent School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Latymer Upper School, London
Liverpool College
Magdalen College School, Oxford
Maynard School, Exeter
Merchant Taylors' School, Liverpool
Mount St. Mary's College, Derbyshire
Northampton High School
Norwich High School
Queen Mary School, Lytham
Red Maids' School, Bristol
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
St. Bees School, Cumbria
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading
St. Mary's College, Crosby
Streatham Hill and Clapham High School
Talbot Heath School, Bournemouth
Upton Hall Convent School, Wirral
Ursuline High School, Ilford
Wellington School, Somerset
William Hulme Grammar School, Manchester

(b) Schools with 31 per cent. to 40 per cent. of APS pupils

Batley Grammar School
Emanuel School, London
Farnborough Hill School
Hereford Cathedral School
King Edward's School, Birmingham
Newcastle-under-Lyme School, Staffordshire
Queen Elizabeth's Hospital School, Bristol
St. Edward's College, Liverpool
Wisbech Grammar School
Wolverhampton Grammar School

(c) Schools with over 40 per cent. APS pupils

None

Fee-charging Schools

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what have been the levels of public expenditure on fee-charging schools by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government in each of the last five years in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is given in the following table:

Financial Year	*DES expenditure (£m)*	*Local government expenditure (£m)*
1982-83	15·0	136·0
1983-84	21·0	135·0
1984-85	27·0	132·0
1985-86	33·0	[1]125·0
1986-87	42·0	[2]125·0

[1] Provisional.
[2] Estimated.

These figures do not include expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or the Ministry of Defence on fee-charging schools. Such expenditure is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and for Defence.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been awarded in grants by the Science and Engineering Research Council to education institutions and others in each year since 1979: how much the council will disburse in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 April 1987, c. *220*]: The question printed in the *Official Report* did not relate to the answer given. The question is as above; the answer remains as printed at column *220*:

The information requested is as follows:

SERC research grants to education institutions and others

Financial year	*Amount £ million (Cash)*
1979-80	43·3
1980-81	56·2
1981-82	62·3
1982-83	67·6
1983-84	70·4
1984-85	78·8
1985-86	87·0
1986-87	[1]98·4
1987-88	[2]103·7

[1] Provisional outturn
[2] Estimates

The Science and Engineering Research Council's total grant-in-aid from the science budget in 1987-88 is £350 million. SERC's overall allocation is determined by my right hon. Friend in the light of advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. The SERC is primarily responsible for deciding priorities within its overall allocation.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been disbursed by the Science and Engineering Research Council teaching in companies

scheme in each year since the scheme was introduced; how much has been disbursed to *(a)* individuals and *(b)* companies in Yorkshire and Humberside in each year since this scheme was introduced; how much is to be disbursed to individuals and companies in Yorkshire and Humberside under the council's latest allocation; what representations about this allocation he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 March 1987, c. *447*]: The answer printed in the *Official Report* is incorrect. The answer is as printed in the *Official Report* for 3 April at column *631*:

The following table shows the information requested in the first part of the question:

Amount disbursed by SERC on teaching company scheme

£K

Financial Year	*Net Expenditure*[3]
1976-77	24·5
1977-78	81·5
1978-79	177·5
1979-80	231·5
1980-81	606·0
1981-82	663·5
1982-83	1,006·0
1983-84	1,600·0
1984-85	2,027·0
1985-86	2,452·5
1986-87	[1]2,760·0
1987-88	[2]3,585·0

[1] Provisional outturn

[2] Estimates

[3] The teaching company scheme is jointly funded. Up to 1984-85, it was funded on a 50-50 basis by the SERC and the Department of Trade and Industry. Since 1985-86, the Economic and Social Research Council has contributed an additional £80,000 a year matched by the DTI. The Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development joined the scheme in 1986-87 when it contributed £20,000. Its estimated contribution in 1987-88 is £150,000.

Because of the way in which TCS records are held disproportionate cost would be involved in extracting figures for a particular region such as Yorkshire and Humberside. No representations about regional allocations have been received.

TCS grants are made to education institutes and not to individuals or companies.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been awarded in grants by the Science and Engineering Research Council to *(a)* education institutions and *(b)* others in Yorkshire and Humberside in each year since 1979; how much the council will disburse in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 April 1987, c. *220*]: The answer printed in the *Official Report* is incorrect. The answer is as printed in the *Official Report* for 31 March at column *447*:

The Science and Engineering Research Council has been asked for this information. I shall reply as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Community Charge

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the minimum level of the community charge to be paid by those on low incomes.

Dr. Boyson: We have received, and continue to receive, a substantial number of representations on this issue.

Council House Sales

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council dwellings were sold in the Corby district during 1986-87.

Mr. Tracey: Corby district has reported selling 229 council dwellings during the first nine months of 1986-87.

Litter

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the adequacy of the litter bins in *(a)* Kensington Gardens and *(b)* other royal parks; and if he will ensure that more and larger receptacles of decent design are provided before the summer season.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are currently reviewing our arrangements for litter collection in Kensington Gardens and the other royal parks. We are looking for improvements in both the collection arrangements and in the design and distribution of bins. We already provide extra bins for the summer season and bins are regularly emptied. But we are clearly not coping satisfactorily with removing the vast amounts of litter produced by visitors, particularly on warm weekends and bank holidays.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation providing for fixed penalty fines for offences committed under the Litter Act 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have no plans to introduce legislation providing for fixed penalties for littering. There are doubts about the practicability of applying such a system, bearing in mind the additional strain that it would place on the police and criminal justice system.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to empower traffic wardens to enforce anti-litter legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no plans to introduce legislation to empower traffic wardens to enforce anti-litter legislation. The service is already fully stretched in performing the duties currently allotted to it, and to extend its range of activities would serve only to spread the scarce manpower resources more thinly and thus reduce the effectiveness of the service.

Flats

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of premises which contain 10 or more flats and which have 10 per cent. or more more vacant flats in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* London at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Tracey: This information is not available.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Fisheries (South Atlantic)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the dates, locations and names of participants in the meetings with the Argentine Government, or their representatives, concerning the future of fisheries in the South Atlantic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There have been no such meetings.

Crown Agents Stamp Company

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to allow Volpone Investments to take over the Crown Agents Stamp Company.

Mr. Chris Patten: Any request which may be made for my consent for the sale by Crown Agents of the Crown Agents Stamp Company Ltd. will be carefully considered on is merits. No such request at present exists. It would be wrong for me to comment on particular companies in such circumstances.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to ensure that staff transferred from the control of Crown Agents with the Crown Agents Stamp Company have their redundancy and transfer entitlements protected; and whether staff made redundant at a later date would be eligible to re-enter the Crown Agents or Civil Service.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Crown Agents are, of course, aware of their obligations to their staff, and will take full account of them in any detailed negotiations for the sale of the Crown Agents Stamp Company.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effects of the sale of the Crown Agents Stamp Company on its reputation for impartiality; what steps he has taken to ensure the maintenance of high standards in the operations of the Crown Agents Stamp Company following its sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The board of Crown Agents has concluded that it would be in the best interests of all concerned for both stamp companies (Crown Agents Stamp Company Ltd. and Crown Agents Philatelic Corporation) to be sold to an enterprise which would provide the commercial skills of an experienced private sector marketing organisation. No specific proposal for the sale of the companies has yet been put to me for consent under the 1979 Act. If and when one is, my decision will take into account factors such as those mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Crown Agents or any other body will have a duty to ensure the proper conduct of the Crown Agents Stamp Company operation after the controlling interest is removed from the Crown Agents.

Mr. Chris Patten: Detailed terms and conditions of sale of a controlling interest in the Crown Agents Stamp Company have yet to be formulated. The Crown Agents board is well aware of the need to take account of the interests and concerns of its present clients.

WALES

Surgical Operations

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the number of surgical operations carried out in Wales in the years *(a)* 1970 to 1975, *(b)* 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Number of surgical operations performed in Wales

	Numbers
1970	89,796
1971	92,788
1972	107,583
1973	104,860
1974	108,647
1975	104,231
1976	105,732
1977	122,066
1978	120,913
1979	118,898
1980	126,938
1981	130,184
1982	129,790
1983	159,911
1984	172,759
1985	173,445

Hospital Building

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many district general hospitals are under construction at the present time in Wales;

(2) how many district general hospitals are planned to be built in Wales *(a)* in the next five years and *(b)* in the next 10 years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Major phases of construction are under way at four district general hospitals and are currently planned at seven. Two new district general hospitals are in the preliminary planning stage. Additionally, a large new hospital being built in Llanelli.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Rogers askded the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure on providing *(a)* National Health Service residential and *(b)* other residential care for mentally handicapped people in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975, *(b)* in the years 1975 to 1980 and *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985, expressed in actual and in 1975 adjusted terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The readily available information is as follows:

Net expenditure on in-patients[1] at mental handicap hospitals

	Actual (£000's)	*[2]1975-76 prices (£000's)*
1976-77	8,775	7,753
1977-78	9,895	7,674
1978-79	11,533	8,083

	Actual (£000's)	[2]1975-76 prices (£000's)
1979-80	13,957	8,371
1980-81	17,792	8,996
1981-82	19,710	9,074
1982-83	21,385	9,180
1983-84	21,906	9,002
1984-85	23,401	9,220
1985-86	24,458	9,071

[1] The figures exclude expenditure on mental handicap patients in units at non-psychiatric hospitals.
[2] Re-priced to 1975-76 prices using the GDP deflator.

Net expenditure on other residential care for the mentally handicapped[1]

	Actual (£000's)	[2]1975-76 prices (£000's)
1976-77	3,892	3,439
1977-78	4,247	3,291
1978-79	5,150	3,610
1979-80	6,366	3,818
1980-81	7,658	3,872
1981-82	8,774	4,039
1982-83	9,940	4,267
1983-84	10,889	4,475
1984-85	12,109	4,771
1985-86	12,876	4,775

[1] Other residential care for the mentally handicapped includes homes and adult training centres.
[2] Re-priced to 1975-76 prices using the GDP deflator.

Mental Illness

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the expenditure on providing *(a)* National Health Service residential and *(b)* other residential care for mentally ill people in Wales (i) in the years 1970 to 1975, (ii) in the years 1975 to 1980 and (iii) in the years 1980 to 1985 expressed in actual and in 1975 adjusted terms;

(2) what was the expenditure on providing community care for mentally ill people in Wales *(a)* in the years 1970 to 1975 *(b)* in the years 1975 to 1980 *(c)* in the years 1980 to 1985 expressed in actual and in 1975 adjusted terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The readily available information is as follows:

Net expenditure on in-patients[1] *at mental illness hospitals*

	Actual (£000's)	[2]1975-76 prices (£000's)
1976-77	21,745	19,212
1977-78	24,278	18,833
1978-79	26,510	18,581
1979-80	31,572	18,935
1980-81	40,230	20,340
1981-82	43,893	20,208
1982-83	48,275	20,723
1983-84	50,456	20,734
1984-85	53,309	21,003
1985-86	55,726	20,668

[1] The figures exclude expenditure on mental illness patients in units at non-psychiatric hospitals.
[2] Re-priced to 1975-76 prices using the GDP deflator.

Net expenditure on other residential care for the mentally ill[1]

	Actual (£000's)	[2]1975-76 prices (£000's)
1976-77	203	179
1977-78	328	254
1978-79	529	371
1979-80	678	407
1980-81	703	355
1981-82	841	387
1982-83	1,035	444
1983-84	1,111	457
1984-85	1,131	446
1985-86	1,108	411

[1] No information is available on expenditure incurred for providing other forms of community care for mentally ill people.
[2] Re-priced to 1975-76 prices using the GDP deflator.

Executive Committee NHS Directorate

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the anticipated eventual capital costs in setting up the Executive Committee and the National Health Service Directorate for Wales;

(2) what are the anticipated eventual revenue costs in operating the Executive Committee and the National Health Service Directorate for Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The establishment of the Executive Committee of the Health Policy Board and the NHS Directorate are a consequence of a reorganisation of existing staff at the Welsh Office Health and Social Work Service Department following the implementation of the report of the Griffiths inquiry. The revenue costs of these staff in 1987-88 are expected to be about £1·75 million. There are no anticipated capital costs.

Cervical Carcinoma

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to reduce the maximum waiting time for in-patient treatment of cervical carcinoma at Singleton hospital, Swansea.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The radiotherapy and oncology service, including in-patient treatment of cervical carcinoma at Singleton hospital, Swansea, has been the subject of a review which has recently been completed. The results of this review are being considered.

M4 (Safety)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on road safety conditions on the M4 motorway between the junctions with the A470 and the A48(M); what steps he is taking to monitor traffic density on this stretch of the M4; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Accident records for the years 1984-86 indicate that road safety conditions on the M4 between junctions 29 and 32 compare very favourably with the rest of the motorway network. Traffic density on this stretch of the motorway is monitored by South Glamorgan county council and current indications are that traffic flows are well within its design capacity.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will improve the technological facilities available to general practitioners in Wales to enable them to provide up-to-date information to patients on waiting lists for hospital treatment everywhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mark Robinson: GPs are private contractors and any improvement of technological facilities is therefore a matter for each practice to consider. The dissemination of hospital waiting list information is a matter for the district health authority. Generally in Wales such information is sent to GPs within the district, who are free to refer patients as they deem appropriate, both within and outside Wales, if the patients are willing to travel.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by hospital the waiting lists for in-patient and out-patient treatment in the South Glamorgan area health authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The requested information is given in the following table:

Total waiting list as at 31 December 1986

Hospital/Clinic	*In-patients*	*Out-patients*
University Hospital of Wales	4,981	11,523
Dental Hospital	—	1,675
Children's ENT	424	480
Cardiff Royal Infirmary	823	314
Prince of Wales	1,472	—
Rookwood	—	—
St. Davids	—	3
Lansdowne	—	—
Glan Ely	—	—
Llandough	412	595
Barry Community	—	—
Sully	—	—
Amy Evans Clinic	—	822
Neale Kent	—	—
Royal Hamadryad	—	—
Whitchurch	—	—
Ely	—	—
Velindre	50	59

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Shareholders

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column 345, on shareholders' lists, he will summarise the views of companies in relation to the supply of names and addresses of shareholders under section 356 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Howard: The consultative document on "Delivery of Annual Accounts and Returns to the Registrar of Companies" raised a number of issues on registers of shareholders. It sought views on a proposal to change the requirement for companies annually to file a full copy of the register of shareholders at company registration offices, where they may be inspected or copied. It proposed, while retaining the duty of companies themselves to maintain full registers of shareholders and permit public inspection and copying of them, that filing of full lists be restricted to companies with fewer than 10 members; with other companies being required to file only the total number of shareholders together with a full list of those individually holding 1 per cent. or more of the company's shares. A majority of the 994 companies and representative organisations who responded favoured some change along the lines proposed, but there were mixed views about the degree of disclosure.

However, nearly all respondents agreed with a related proposal to raise the fees for inspection and copying of lists of members taken from company registers. Most also agreed that the Companies Act should be amended to allow these fees to be fixed by order.

House of Fraser

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the terms of reference of the inspectors appointed under the Companies Act to investigate the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of shares in House of Fraser during 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Howard: The inspectors were appointed under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs of House of Fraser Holdings plc. As I said in my answer of 27 April, at column *4*, I have referred the inspectors in particular to the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of shares in House of Fraser plc in 1984 and 1985.

British Waterways Board

Mr. Bevan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the maintenance activities of the British Waterways Board will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The report is published today.

The commission was asked to investigate the efficiency and costs of BWB's maintenance of its waterways. Particular aspects mentioned in the terms of reference included the scope for additional use of contractors or consultants, BWB's procedures for appraising maintenance requirements and assessing priorities, setting and implementing maintenance standards and estimating costs for in-house and contracted-out work. The commission was also asked to comment on how far BWB's maintenance operations were programmed to fit the current and future priorities of the leisure and freight departments.

The commission has made serious criticisms of much of BWB's management and procedures but noted that improvements in management and planning were taking place. The commission found that BWB was only just beginning to define national standards for maintenance. It needed to define maintenance tasks in detail as a step towards being able to compare in-house and contractors' costs systematically. These comparisons would help BWB to decide what work to do with its own labour force and what to contract out. The commission recommended that BWB should decide on the size and deployment of its labour force on the basis of a detailed assessment of work load, using the new definitions of maintenance standards and tasks, and of the cheapest ways of doing the work using reliable cost comparisons.

The commission considered that BWB's maintenance programme should reflect more closely the relative contributions of leisure and freight uses to revenue. It recommended that in appraising project proposals BWB should have regard to the relationship between income (or

usage) and maintenance expenditure on individual waterways. While BWB's published objectives acknowledged that leisure use offered better prospects for increasing its income, the commission felt that this needed to have more practical recognition in the remit given to the area engineers about deciding what maintenance should be done.

The commission noted that BWB cannot in practice charge the users or beneficiaries for much of the maintenance work it does for public safety and health reasons, for drainage purposes and for some public leisure use. The commission suggested that the Department of the Environment should consider relating part of its grant to BWB to its costs arising from the public service aspects of maintenance. BWB's revenue from users, and its ability to increase such revenue, could then be more readily seen in the context of those costs relating to work done for users who could be charged.

Finally, as is usual in such references, the commission was asked to consider whether BWB is pursuing a course of conduct which operates against the public interest. It concluded that, in view of the difficult circumstances in which BWB had to operate, and its acknowledgement of the need for change, the shortcomings identified could not be judged to operate against the public interest. But the commission stressed the need for BWB to deal expeditiously with the report's recommendations and suggested that a further external review should take place in five years' time.

BWB will be producing its preliminary response to the commission's findings within three to four months, in the light of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will make a statement.

PRIME MINISTER

Financial Management Initiative

Sir Philip Holland asked the Prime Minister when she expects the main programme of the financial management initiative in relation to non-departmental public bodies to be completed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The programme of work I announced on 19 November 1984, at columns *57-58*, has now largely been completed. The purpose of the programme was to produce progressive value for money improvements in executive non-departmental public bodies.

UN Environment and Development Report (Ministerial Speech)

Dr. David Clark asked the Prime Minister if the speech by the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning on the occasion of the launch of the United Nations world commission on environment and development report on 27 April represents Government policy; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. My hon. Friend welcomed the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development on behalf of the Government. The report raises a number of complex issues which we are now studying in detail. In his remarks, my hon. Friend referred to the initiative taken by the Government on the problem of the debt burden of the poorest Sub-Saharan African countries which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the spring meetings of the World Bank and the IMF at the beginning of April.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Waltham Forest Demonstration

Mr. Deakins asked the Attorney-General if he intends to prosecute any of the speakers at a demonstration outside Waltham Forest town hall on 9 April for racial abuse, incitement to racial harassment or incitement to violence.

The Solicitor-General: No complaints of criminal offences arising out of this incident have been received by the Crown prosecution service or by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Land Registry

Dr. David Clark asked the Attorney-General what plans the Government have to make the Land Registry more accessible to the public, in line with the 1985 Law Commission recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Government will make a decision on the proposals contained in the Law Commission's report No. 148 on opening the land register when it has completed its consideration of the representations received.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Commission has now brought forward proposals for the revaluation of the deutschmark for purposes of the common agricultural policy; and to what extent common agricultural policy prices for the United Kingdom will be affected.

Mr. Gummer: As part of the 1987 price fixing the Commission has proposed revaluation of the green deutschmark by 2·9 points for milk and milk products, 2·4 points for cereals, eggs and poultry, and 1·8 points for other sectors. Common agricultural policy support prices in the United Kingdom will not be affected by the adoption of this proposal.

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the result of his representations to the Republic of Ireland about delays in payments of monetary compensatory amounts to farmers in Northern Ireland; if these delays are still continuing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Payments generally are now being made more promptly by the Republic of Ireland authorities, but there are still some monetary compensatory amount claims under query for which payments have been outstanding for some time. It is hoped that measures taken as a result of the useful discussions my officials have had with officials from the Republic of Ireland will enable these payments also to be released before long.

Sea Defence and Coast Protection

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking towards harmonising the grant rates for sea defence and coast protection.

Mr. Jopling: I announced in February that the maximum rate of grant for sea defence schemes carried out by water authorities was being increased to 65 per cent. with effect from 1 April 1987. The Secretary of State for Wales and I have also decided that the maximum rate of grant for schemes under the Coast Protection Act 1949 should be reduced from 79 per cent. to 70 per cent. for all schemes where the full application for approval is received by the Department concerned on or after 1 October 1987.

From the same date we will also be introducing for such schemes a condition under which the rate of grant notified when the scheme is approved will be available for a fixed period which will normally allow two years for the construction work. Work not completed within this period will qualify for the rate of grant applicable at the time it is carried out.

ENERGY

Renewable Energy

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide a detailed breakdown of funds provided for research into renewable energy forms for each of the past five financial years, and the amounts currently allocated for the present financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's expenditure on individual technologies for each of the past five financial years and the budget provision for the current financial year is as follows:

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*Estimated Outturn 1986-87*	*Budget Provision 1987-88*
Wind	2·5	2·5	4·8	5·4	3·7	3·20
Wave	3·1	1·0	0·4	0·4	0·1	0·10
Geothermal Aquifers	1·5	1·8	1·1	0·3	0·1	0·20
Geothermal Hot Dry Rocks	3·0	2·9	4·6	3·5	3·5	3·20
Solar	1·4	0·9	0·5	0·7	0·8	1·10
Biomass[1]	1·2	0·7	1·1	0·8	1·3	1·30
Tidal			0·3	0·1	0·1	1·00
Hydro Electric					0·L	0·15
General and Strategic Studies						0·95
Technology Transfer						0·40
External Contributions including EEC receipts	3·2	2·0	3·3	2·1	[2]3·4	[2]2·90
ETSU R and D Management	2·0	1·9	2·1	2·0	2·3	2·10
Grand Total	17·9	13·7	18·2	15·3	[2]15·4	[2]16·60

[1] Where available figures include expenditure on waste as a fuel and passive solar design under the energy efficiency demonstration scheme. It is not possible to segregate a 1987-88 budget for demonstration projects on waste as a fuel from the total budget provision for the EEDS of £6·5 million.
[2]Estimate

Coal Industry

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish, by areas, figures for fatalities in the coal industry for 1985-86.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 12 March at columns *280-81*.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish, by areas, figures of serious accidents in the coal industry in 1985-86.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures of serious accidents in the coal industry for 1985-86 are as follows:

Area	*Numbers*
Scottish	63
North Yorkshire	100
North Derbyshire	59
South Midlands	40
Western	65
North East	80
South Yorkshire	86
Nottinghamshire	115
Kent	5
South Wales	91

I regret that the footnote to my answer of 12 March, at columns *281-82*, should have read:

"The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985, which came into effect on 1 April 1986, required the reporting of accidents which were not originally included. The figures for 1986-87 will therefore be calculated on a different basis to earlier years."
Source: British Coal Corporation.

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received any representations from the British Coal Corporation under sections 6 and 7 of the Coal Industry Act 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received representations from the British Coal Corporation under section 7 of the Coal Industry Act 1987 stating that the UDM represents a substantial proportion of the members of the mineworkers pension scheme (MPS) but lacks the right to participate fully in that scheme.

I have also received represention from the British Coal Corporation under section 6 of the Coal Industry Act 1987 stating that there are four organisations representing a substantial proportion of the corporation's employees or of any class of them who do not enjoy as of right full participation in the social welfare body known as the Coal

Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO). These are the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) and the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computing Staff (APEX), the British Association of Colliery Management (BACM) and the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS).

Having considered these representations, I propose to make orders under sections 6 and 7 to permit such participation, and my Department has sent formal letters of consultation on the appropriate changes to the memorandum and articles of association of CISWO and to the MPS to the corporation, those organisations and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), as required under the Act. They have been asked to make such representations as they may wish by 15 June.

The Government made clear during the passage of the Act their determination to see removed injustices in these areas caused by NUM intransigence.

Coal Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 6 April, *Official Report*, column 6, if he will take steps to produce details of all fatal accidents which have occurred in the coal industry for the year 1986-87, broken down according to coalfield areas, as soon as possible.

Mr. David Hunt [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *447-48*]: Details of fatal accidents in the coal industry for 1986-87 are as follows:

Area	*Numbers*
Scottish	1
North Yorkshire	4
North Derbyshire	1
South Midlands	0
Western	0
North East	0
South Yorkshire	4
Nottinghamshire	2
Kent	0
South Wales	3

Source: British Coal Corporation.

TRANSPORT

Summer Morn

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the Summer Morn incident in the Irish sea on 18 February 1987, he will now ensure that all inspectors' reports into the disappearance of vessels in the Irish sea over the period of five years are published in full.

Mr. Moore: Three United Kingdom fishing vessels have disappeared in the Irish sea in unexplained circumstances between 1982 and 1986. Inspectors' reports are confidential to my Department and the reports on those three losses will not be published, but the Department's investigations found no evidence of submarine involvement as there was in the Summer Morn incident.

North Circular Road

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the public inquiry concerning the upgrading of a section of the north circular road at Ealing in west London commenced; when it was completed; when the inspector's report was received; and when a decision concerning this road improvement will be announced;

(2) if he will state the reasons for the delay in reaching a decision concerning proposals to upgrade a section of the north circular road at Ealing in west London following submission of the inspector's report after the public inquiry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The public inquiry into the proposed improvement of the north circular road between Popes lane and the A40 opened in December 1983 and closed in June 1984. The inspector submitted his report in April 1985. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on Tuesday 7 April 1987 at column *125*.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Peter Rees asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he took of the possibility of earth tremors in approving plans for the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Moore: The possibility of earth tremors affecting the tunnel was examined in detail for the 1973 Channel tunnel project by distinguished geologists from the Institute of Geological Science (now the British Geological Survey), the Bureau de Recherches Geologiques et Minieres, and the British and French consulting engineers employed on the project. After examining all the historical evidence of earthquakes in the area, including the one in 1580 referred to in a recent article in the *New Scientist*, and undertaking sophisticated measurements of the present geology of the area, the conclusion was that the risk to a bored tunnel was very low indeed.

This evidence was reviewed again by consultants to the present promoters, who included a special section on seismicity in their proposal. The Government assessors who examined the engineering aspects of all the proposals put forward agreed with the view that the risk was very slight, and stated that

"displacements during a very large earthquake would be in the order of millimetres and damage would be nominal only."

Dangerous Chemicals (Transport)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department takes to monitor the carriage of dangerous chemicals by road within the United Kingdom; and how many breaches of the relevant regulations have been drawn to his attention in each of the past four years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Moore: Responsibility for enforcing the regulations on the carriage of dangerous substances by road rests with the Health and Safety Executive. It is supported in this by the police and by my Department's traffic examiners, who carry out checks on vehicles carrying out dangerous substances from time to time.

There is no central record of offences.

Disabled People, Merseyside

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on transport provision made for disabled people on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Passenger transport authorities and their executives have a statutory duty to have regard to the transport needs of the disabled in arranging for public transport provision in their area. It is for them to judge how best this duty can be met.

I understand that in Merseyside the passenger transport executive recently let a fresh contract for the provision of special transport for the disabled. It has set aside £500,000 for this purpose in 1977-88—an increase of £200,000 on last year's expenditure.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy towards the provision of zebra crossings and on circulars issued to local authorities on the safety of such crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Zebra crossings can improve road safety in certain circumstances where there is high conflict between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. We commend their use. The Department issued advice on these crossings covering inter alia, road safety aspects in advice note TA/10/80 "Design Considerations for Pelican and Zebra Crossings", a copy of which is in the Library. This advice has recently been revised. I will write to the hon. Member enclosing the latest information.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many zebra crossings and how many pelican crossings with lights have been authorised on roads for which he is responsible in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The approximate numbers of such crossings are as follows:

	Pelican Crossings	*Zebra Crossings*
1979	29	3
1980	23	2
1981	19	5
1982	16	0
1983	18	1
1984	16	1
1985	41	1
1986	26	1

Sail Training Vessel Marques (Loss)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received the report of the investigation into the loss of the Marques; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have now received the report of the formal investigation into the loss of the sail training vessel Marques in the Atlantic in June 1984 with a loss of 19 lives, and I have placed a copy in the Library.

The report concludes that the cause of the loss of the Marques was an unexpected and violent squall which resulted in the severe heeling, flooding and sinking of the ship. The report finds that it was not the fault of any person or persons that the Marques had insufficient stability to resist the squall, but comments that, if judged by the knowledge and experience now available, the stability of the Marques would be found to have been inadequate and the vessel unseaworthy for operation as a sail training ship in non-coastal waters.

The report finds that the Marques was in a proper state of repair, and that so far as the structure of the vessel was concerned she was in a safe and seaworthy condition. It also finds that, with certain reservations, she was properly manned and sailed.

The report's main recommendation is that criteria should be developed for assessing safe standards of stability for sail training ships. As the report notes, the Department of Transport has already commissioned technical studies with this in view. This work will be taken forward as rapidly as possible, in conjunction with the organisations responsible for sail training, with a view to the publication of a merchant shipping notice on standards of stability for sailing ships. These criteria will in future be applied in considering applications for load line certificates or load line exemption certificates in respect of sail training ships. The report also contains a number of other recommendations concerned with the operation of ships of this kind and with the conduct of races involving sail training ships. These recommendations will all be followed up in consultation with the organisations involved.

The report contains a number of criticisms, including criticism of the Department of Transport's decision to issue a load line exemption certificate for the vessel when stability data were not available, and concludes that without such stability information the ship was unseaworthy: however, it finds that the failure to provide this information did not cause the loss of the vessel. The Department notes this finding, which relates to a difficult judgment which was required to be taken about a vessel with a long record of safe operation worldwide in all weather conditions. Load line exemption certificates will not in future be issued in the absence of stability data.

Lorries (Offences)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of convictions obtained in each magistrates court area since May 1985 against owners and drivers of motor lorries which were being used when the permitted second axle weight was exceeded and against owners and drivers of motor lorries which were used when the permitted gross weight was exceeded, both offences contrary to section 40(5) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1972, and the level of fine imposed on each occasion on the driver and the owner.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

No reliable information is available separately for goods vehicles. The readily available information relates to all findings of guilt for offences of exceeding the gross weight or axle weight and is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles England and Wales . . . Supplementary Tables" (table 5 of the issue for 1985). Table 6 of the same publication gives information on fines imposed and table 17 on findings of guilt in each police area for all types of load offence. More detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prisons (Integration)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the practice of integration in Northern Ireland prisons, stating what practices apply in which prisons.

Mr. Scott: The Government remain of the view that the allocation of prisoners to accommodation without regard to paramilitary affiliation or religious denomination makes for more effective security and control and gives prisoners a better opportunity to serve their sentences free from paramilitary influence. Segregation can provide the opportunity for paramilitary organisations to increase their hold on prisoners and to organise cohesive action of a disruptive nature.

The remaining special category prisoners continue to be housed in compounds at Her Majesty's prison Maze according to paramilitary faction and there is de facto segregation in some cellular wings in the prison; prisoners in all other prisons are housed in mixed accommodation.

ACE Programme

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many jobs are currently available through the ACE programme; how many applicants have sought the chance to establish an ACE project in Northern Ireland since its inception; how many jobs have been created; how many proposals have been turned down; and how many are awaiting a decision.

Mr. Viggers: There are currently 6,886 ACE jobs in existence; 1,591 applicants have applied to establish an ACE project since the scheme was introduced. The average number of ACE jobs created each year since 1981 is as follows:

Period	*Average number of jobs created*
1981-82	430
1982-83	1,270
1983-84	2,529
1984-85	3,080
1985-86	3,890
1986-87	6,150

Note: 26 proposals have been rejected; and 110 new proposals at present await a decision.

Integrated Education

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any of the funds being made available to Northern Ireland from American sources will be used for integrated education.

Mr. Scott: The disbursement of funds from the International Fund for Ireland is a matter for the independent board appointed by the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Prisoners

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the levels of education, pastoral care and psychological help available to prisoners in Northern Ireland prisons.

Mr. Scott: The level of care and attention given to prisoners in these and other respects is of a high standard and I am satisfied with the services provided by teachers, medical staff and prison chaplains. In common with all aspects of the regime, the provision of education, religious ministration and health care are kept under review.

Devolution

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on his policy towards devolved government in Northern Ireland in the light of the proposals contained in the Ulster Defence Association's document, entitled "Commonsense," a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Tom King: It remains the Government's objective to establish in Northern Ireland a system of devolved government that would command widespread acceptance throughout the community. Any recognition of the need for the involvement of the minority in such a system is welcome, since it would be essential to the achievement of widespread acceptance. Progress towards devolution now depends on the constitutional political parties. I hope, therefore, that talks involving those parties may soon take place.

St. Angelo Airport

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future of St. Angelo airport.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for Fermanagh district council, the owner of the airport, but I understand that the council is currently negotiating an agreement with a private aviation interest under which the company concerned would accept full responsibility for maintaining and running the airport.

Terrorists

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons convicted of terrorist offences are currently in prison in the Province; how many are men and how many women; and what is the average length of sentence served in prison for such crimes.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Conway asked the Paymaster General what has been the percentage job placement from the YTS in the Shrewsbury travel-to-work area in the last period for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the form requested.

The MSC conducts a regular follow-up survey of YTS leavers. The latest results for the local authority district of Shrewsbury, covering leavers during the period 1 April 1986 to 31 September 1986, show that some three months after leaving 63 per cent. were in full-time employment; 5 per cent. were in part-time employment; 3 per cent. were

on a full-time course; 9 per cent. were on another YTS scheme; 4 per cent. were doing something else; and 16 per cent. were unemployed.

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Paymaster General if he will announce the numbers currently leaving YTS and going into employment.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular follow-up survey of all YTS leavers. The latest results, covering leavers during the period 1 April 1986 to 31 September 1986, show that some three months after leaving 65 per cent. were in full-time employment; 4 per cent. were in part-time employment; 4 per cent. were on a full-time course at a college or training centre; 5 per cent. were on another YTS scheme; 3 per cent. were doing something else; and 20 per cent. were unemployed.

The figures do not total 100 per cent. due to rounding.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Amess asked the Paymaster General if he will give the number of unemployed people in Basildon for the last month for which he has figures and for each equivalent period in each of the past five years.

Mr. Trippier: The following information is in the Library.

The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants in the Basildon local authority area from March of each year from 1984. Statistics of unemployment for local areas are derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983. The comparison is affected by the change in the timing of the compilation of the count in March 1986.

	Number
March 1984	8,775
March 1985	9,331
March 1986	8,823
March 1987	8,018

Mr. Hannam asked the Paymaster General if he will list the unemployment figures for Exeter for March in each of the years 1975 to 1987.

Mr. Trippier: The following information is in the Library.

The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the Exeter local authority district for March of each year from 1984. This comparison is affected by the change in the timing of the compilation of the count in March 1986. Statistics of unemployment for local authority districts are derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

	Number
March 1984	4,430
March 1985	4,998
March 1986	4,982
March 1987	4,636

Redundancies

Mr. John asked the Paymaster General what was the cost to public funds of redundancies in the following firms: *(a)* Webglow Limited, *(b)* Summit Operation Services Limited, *(c)* Recording Audio Myers Limited, *(d)* Bulldog Reclamations Limited and *(e)* Taylor Stenmec Limited; and whether the firms named met part of the cost of redundancies.

Mr. Trippier: There has been no cost to public funds in respect of any redundancies which may have occurred at these firms.

Mr. John asked the Paymaster General what was the cost to public fund of redundancies in the following firms: *(a)* Hymid Graemross Limited, *(b)* Homebean Limited, *(c)* Benchase Limited, *(d)* Cliffmore Limited and *(e)* Powerspeed Limited; and whether the firms named met part of the cost of redundancies.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is shown in the table:

Firm	*Cost to public funds*[1] £	*Firm's contribution to cost*[2] £
Hymid Graemross Ltd.	Nil	n/a
Homebean Ltd.	Nil	n/a
Benchase Ltd.	Nil	n/a
Cliffmore Ltd.	Nil	n/a
Powerspeed Ltd.	27,360·01	20,004·46

[1] The sum represents redundancy payments made direct to employees out of the redundancy fund.

[2] When a direct redundancy payment is made to an employee, the employer automatically incurs a debt to the redundancy fund. The sum therefore represents the amount repaid to the fund, less any rebate that would otherwise be due.

n/a Not applicable

Mr. John asked the Paymaster General what was the cost to public funds of redundancies in the following firms: *(a)* Birkett-Ycol Limited, *(b)* Boulton Fabrications Limited, *(c)* Whitfield Wylie Limited, *(d)* The Long Wire Company Limited, *(e)* The Manor Engineering Company Limited and *(f)* Brownsior Caludon Engineering Limited; and whether the firms named met part of the cost of redundancies.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is shown in the table:

Firm	[1] *Cost to Public Funds* £	[2] *Firm's Contribution to cost* £
Birkett Wycol Ltd.	nil	[3]n/a
Boulton Fabrications Ltd.	2,839·56	139·56
Whitfield Wylie Ltd.	nil	[3]n/a
The Longford Wire Co. Ltd.	112,342·01	1,962·81
The Manor Engineering Co. Ltd.	96,328·92	15,982·14
Brownsoov Caludon Engineering Co. Ltd.	52,126·93	10,276·63

[1] The sums represent both redundancy payments made direct to employees out of the redundancy fund and rebates paid to the firm out of the fund in the last three years.

[2] When a direct redundancy payment is made to an employee, the employer automatically incurs a debt to the redundancy fund. The sums therefore represents the amount repaid to the fund, less any rebate that would otherwise be due.

[3] n/a Not applicable

Mr. John asked the Paymaster General what was the cost to public funds of redundancies in the following firms: *(a)* Hayes Shelicast Limited, *(b)* South Wales Forgemasters Limited, *(c)* Belgrave Engineering Limited, *(d)* Belgrave Parsons Limited, *(e)* Belgrave Transmission Limited and *(f)* Belgrave Finery Limited.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is shown in the table:

Firm	[1] *Cost to Public Funds* £	[2] *Firm's Contribution to cost* £
Hayes Shelfcast Ltd.	59,731·48	1,731·48
South Wales Forgemasters Ltd.	274,236·76	—
Belgrave Engineering Ltd.	77,325·42	43,867·32
Belgrave Parsons Ltd.	77,201·49	11,135·73
Belgrave Transmission Ltd.	nil	[3]n/a
Belgrave Finery Ltd.	nil	[3]n/a

[1] The sums represent both redundancy payments made direct to employees out of the redundancy fund and rebates paid to the firm out of the fund in the last three years.

[2] When a direct redundancy payment is made to an employee, the employer automatically incurs a debt to the redundancy fund. The sums therefore represents the amount repaid to the fund, less any rebate that would otherwise be due.

[3]n/a Not applicable.

Health and Safety

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General whether Her Majesty's Government have complied with European Community amending directive 82/501/EEC on the major accident hazards of certain industries.

Mr. Trippier: Directive 82/501/EEC is implemented on Great Britain by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards (CIMAH) Regulations 1984. Directive 87/216/EEC, which amends directive 82/501/EEC, was adopted in 19 March 1987 and notified to Her Majesty's Government on 24 March 1987. Member states must comply with the amendment within 18 months of notification, and work has already commenced to amend the CIMAH regulations.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Care Proceedings

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications for care proceedings were made in juvenile courts in 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) if he will estimate the number of applicants for care proceedings in the juvenile courts for the first quarter of 1987.

Mr. Mellor: The information which is readily available to me and is known to be incomplete, relates to applications for orders in civil care proceedings under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969. This indicates that there were about 5,200 such applications in 1984, and 5,600 in 1985. Information for 1986, and for the first quarter of 1987, is not yet available.

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne, dated 21 February, concerning matters raised by Mrs. Vivienne Stephens, of 1 North Roskear village, Camborne, Cornwall.

Mr. Hurd: I have today written to my hon. Friend.

Trevi Ministers (Meeting)

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the outcome of the recent meeting of Trevi Ministers in Brussels.

Mr. Hurd: Trevi Ministers met in Brussels on 28 April under the Belgian presidency. This meeting was part of the regular pattern of Trevi business and follows on from the previous meeting in London on 9 December last, under my chairmanship, and later work by officials.

Ministers agreed to establish new arrangements for the exchange of information on significant thefts of arms or explosives, or discovery of arms or explosives, which might be of terrorist significance. We also approved practical arrangements whereby a Community country which refused to admit or deport a non-Community national for reasons connected with terrorism would inform other Community countries of its decision, together with identifying particulars. We further agreed to inform the European Commission of our view that any new measures to facilitate the free movement of goods within the Community should not inhibit national authorities making such checks as they thought appropriate on the movement of firearms across Community frontiers.

Ministers welcomed progress towards full operation of a secure communications link between police forces, and approved plans for the regular updating of the assessment of the terrorist threat to Community countries which had been adopted at our meeting in London last December.

The United Kingdom will organise and host two Trevi conferences later this year: one of directors of forensic and scientific laboratories to discuss the detection of firearms and explosives at airports; the other of national correspondents of member states dealing with the problem of football hooliganism.

We agreed principles for the sharing of information and practical co-operation so that a drugs liaison officer representing one Community country in a country outside the Community could, by agreement, conduct inquiries on behalf of, and provide information to, other Community countries. More detailed arrangements will be developed further by officials.

For obvious reasons, much of what Trevi discusses, especially on terrorism, cannot be made public. But this was a productive meeting which carried still further the co-operation within the Community on matters of crimes of terrorism.

The growing importance of Trevi was shown by the fact that the US Attorney-General, the Canadian Solicitor-General and the Austrian Minister of the Interior came to discuss in the margins of our meeting how their countries should be associated with our work.

Immigration

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the outcome of the recent meeting of the Ministers of the European Community responsible for immigration.

Mr. Hurd: At a meeting in London in October, during the United Kingdom presidency, the Ministers of the states of the European Community responsible for immigration set up an ad hoc working group of senior officials. At our meeting in Brussels on 28 April, which was

also attended by my noble Friend Lord Cockfield, a vice-president of the European Community, my ministerial colleagues and I, considered the first report from this group and agreed on a number of important steps to co-ordinate our methods of immigration control and our response to the growing abuse of the right to claim asylum, and the increased use of forged or fraudulent documents.

The meeting recognised that the strengthening of immigration controls at the external frontiers of the Community was a necessary complement to the movement towards gradual abolition of border checks at its internal frontiers. Ministers instructed officials to pursue vigorously their work on the greater harmonisation of the visa policies of the different countries in the Community since this had an important part to play in the strengthening of controls.

As regards claims to asyluth Ministers agreed to recommend all member states to take a number of measures, in line with action that some countries, including the United Kingdom had taken, or were considering. These included making provision which would

> make carriers responsible for removing someone brought by them into a Community country without the required documents and meeting the cost involved; make possible the impositon of penalties on carriers who bring passengers without the required documents; establish simplified procedures for reaching decisions where asylum was claimed but the application was unjustified because it clearly failed to meet the requirements of the 1951 contention.

Finally, my colleagues and I endorsed recommendations from officials to combat the use of forged and fraudulent documents. These included the preparation and circulation to the immigration authorities of all our countries of an information bulletin giving particulars of cases of fraud that had been detected.

The working group of officials will continue its study of the response that the countries of the Community can make to what are common problems, and will report again to Ministers later in the year.

Immigration (Detention)

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the accommodation available for the detention of persons under the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Hurd: In the light of continuing pressure on existing accommodation for the detention of persons under the Immigration Act 1971, I have decided that the most effective and economic way to provide more detention accommodation for immigration purposes quickly will be to lease a ship. My Department has therefore agreed to charter from Sealink the motor vessel Earl William. The charter is for three months in the first instance.

The ship will be moored at Harwich and will remain alongside the quay throughout its use as an immigration detention centre. In common with existing immigration detention centres, care of the detainees will be the responsibility of Securior. Catering services will be provided by a private contractor.

The Earl William is a modern car ferry; sleeping accommodation is in four-berth cabins, each with integral sanitation. In practice we would expect the number accommodated to be no more than 120, which is about half the total passenger capacity of the vessel. The public rooms on the ship will provide adequate space for relaxation and visits by relatives, friends and lawyers in comfortable but not luxurious conditions. The ship will be available to the Home Office from about 11 May and the first detention cases will go on board about the middle of May.

Drug Misuse and Crime

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in the *Official Report* details of the research known to his Department on the relationship between drug misuse and crime.

Mr. Mellor: There has been a great deal of research on this subject. Three recent major studies are referred to in "Criminal Justice: A Working Paper", a copy of which is in the Library. An account of present and proposed studies funded by the Home Office will be included in the Home Office research programme 1987-88, which is to be published shortly.

Prisons (Medical Services)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will set out in the *Official Report* details of research commissioned by his Department into the psychiatric needs of the prison population;

(2) what research has been commissioned by his Department into the case for specialist psychiatric units within the prison system for prisoners not regarded as detainable under the Mental Health Act; and when he expects a decision to be taken on the case for such units.

Mr. Mellor: The study referred to in the reply given to a question to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 16 February, at column *436*, will provide definitive data on which the prison medical service may consider the particular needs for this part of the prison population. The study is expected to take three years. In the meantime, censuses of mentally disturbed prisoners undertaken by medical officers provide a starting point for the development of improved arrangements for their care and management. It is not envisaged that such arrangements will amount to separate psychiatric units.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the study of the practicability, costs and benefits of clustering prison establishments in groups to enable one establishment to act as a main centre providing medical services for the others to be completed.

Mr. Mellor: This is a long-term study, for which a completion date has yet to be set.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the visit to Scotland by the head of prison nursing services to examine arrangements for nurse officer training in the Scottish prison service is expected to take place.

Mr. Mellor: A date has yet to be set.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last five years prisoners have petitioned him seeking a second medical opinion; and what response was made to each such petition.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not statistically recorded.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many consultant psychiatrists employed by the prison service do not have control of National Health Service beds.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not readily ascertainable from central records and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisons (Hygiene)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the professional qualifications held by each of his Department's safety officers responsible for carrying out hygiene inspections of prison service establishments; and how many such officers are currently in post.

Mr. Mellor: There are six health and safety officers in post and two vacancies are being advertised. All hold the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene certificate in food hygiene and the handling of food; five hold the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene diploma in food hygiene.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the recent instructions issued by his Department on hygiene inspection of prison establishments and on procedures to be followed in cleaning prison kitchens.

Mr. Mellor: No. The recent instructions on hygiene inspections set out detailed arrangements for the cleaning of prison kitchens to ensure that the Department meets the requirements of the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970. But it is not normal practice to publish management instructions to staff.

Occupational Health Review

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the main steps being taken to implement the recommendations of the occupational health review, referred to in the Government reply to recommendation 21 of the Third Report from the Social Services Committee in Session 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: The main steps being taken to implement the recommendations of the occupational health review carried out by the Department are as follows:

1. The reintroduction of medical exainations for new recruits.
2. The further development of a pilot scheme designed to enhance staff fitness.
3. The development of a training package specifically designed for prison staff on AIDS.
4. Consideration of the possibility of producing a training package to help staff cope with the stress of working in the prison environment.
5. A preventive health campaign on smoking.

Public Disorder (Police Reserves)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *224*, he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of officers held in reserve on 21 March and the anticipated scene of possible public disorder.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner informs me that 460 officers were held in reserve for use if there had been an outbreak of public disorder in Tottenham. Fortunately, there was not.

THE ARTS

Disabled People

Mr. Chapman asked the Minister for the Arts what opportunities there are for arts organisations working with disabled people to benefit from arts sponsorship.

Mr. Luce: The business sponsorship incentive scheme encourages businesses to sponsor the arts, including arts organisations working with the disabled. I am particularly pleased that the latest list of awards under the scheme, announced on 7 April, included six projects designed to bring arts to the disabled and disadvantaged. I hope this success will encourage other businesses to follow suit.

"Stratford Mill" (Valuation)

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts what criteria were used in selecting the two sources of outside advice on the valuation proposed by the offerers of Constable's Stratford Mill in satisfaction of inheritance tax; what steps were taken to avoid a potential conflict of interest on the part of those sources of advice; what attempts were made to obtain a counter-check on their valuations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Government are advised on valuations for works of art by their expert advisers in particular fields. The expert advisers, who are selected according to their professional expertise, act independently on behalf of the Government. In this case, in view of the importance of the painting, two separate valuations were obtained from advisers in the National gallery and the Tate gallery.

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts what indications he received as to the precise time limit governing a decision on whether or not to accept Constable's Stratford Mill, in satisfaction of inheritance tax; what steps he took to check the necessity for such a time limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: It was important to reach a decision as quickly as possible in this offer of a painting of great quality.

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts what discussions he had with the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission regarding the implications of the deadline for a decision on acceptance of Constable's Stratford Mill in lieu of tax for the practicability and desirability of consulting the Commission as a whole; how many members of the Commission were actually consulted and by what criteria they were selected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have discussed with the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission the arrangements for acceptances in cases where a short deadline for decision may be imposed, and I have asked him to consult the commissioners on how best to ensure that I receive good and speedy advice in such cases.

Young Artists

Mr. Lord asked the Minister for the Arts if he is in a position to give further details of his scheme for assisting young artists by displaying their work in Government offices.

Mr. Luce: I am introducing an experimental scheme whereby works of art which have not previously been exhibited widely will be reproduced and displayed in selected Government offices for the benefit of those who visit those offices and of the staff who work in them. Initially, the scheme will be limited to the Management and Personnel Office and the Office of Arts and Libraries, for which I am directly responsible. I am selecting a consultant to advise me on the details and the purchase of the works of arts. If the experiment is a success, other Government Departments will be invited to join in and the scheme will be operated on a large scale.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Pensions

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of men have a sufficient national insurance contribution record by the age of 60 years to entitle them to a 100 per cent. basic pension.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for the latest date available, showing the average annual number of people in receipt of each of the following benefits, distinguishing in each case between claimants, adult dependants and child dependants: national insurance unemployement benefit, sickness benefit, invalidity, widows and retirement pensions, non-contributory invalidity pension and supplementary benefit without any national insurance benefit; and if he will estimate the corresponding figures for 1987-88.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Secure Units

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects the regional secure unit programme to be completed; and which health authorities have not yet opened a purpose-built secure unit.

Mrs. Currie: Eleven of the 14 regional health authorities now have permanent regional secure units (RSUs) in operation. Permanent RSUs can either be purpose-built or adaptations of existing hospital facilities.

Of the remaining three regions, a permanent RSU at Rubery hill hospital, Birmingham (west midlands) is scheduled to open this year. A permanent unit in the Oxford region is also expected to open at Borocourt hospital in 1987. A further two permanent RSUs are being planned in the Oxford region. South-West Thames region is planning a permanent RSU at Netherne hospital, which will function in association with several "close supervision" units already operating in existing hospitals.

In addition, the North-East Thames region has plans to provide two further pemanent RSUs to complement the one already in operation at Runwell hospital, Southend. A second permanent RSU in South-Western region is due to be completed at Glenside hospital, Bristol, in 1988.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the role proposed for non-regional secure unit facilities in the psychiatric assessment of offenders, referred to in the Government response to recommendation 25 of the third report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86, indicating which other facilities it is intended to utilise.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Liverpool Women's Hospital (Cervical Cancer Tests)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why 45,000 records of women tested at Liverpool women's hospital for cervical cancer have been re-examined; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 10 April, *Official Report*, column *503*, if he has yet written to the voluntary organisations' steering group on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 with proposals for their involvement in planning the implementation of the Act; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Major: I am still considering the points made by the members of the steering committee at the meeting on 1 April. As indicated in my earlier reply, I shall write to them as soon as possible suggesting a framework for involving voluntary organisations, where appropriate, in future work on the implementation of the Act.

1991 Census

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any decision has been taken on the inclusion of a religious question in the 1991 census; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to improve the accuracy of the information available to him about National Health Service waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: All health authorities are asked to ensure that their waiting lists accurately reflect the demand for services and I am not aware of any specific problems with the data they supply. Since 1 April an improved system for collecting waiting list data has been in operation. This will provide the Department with more frequent and more comprehensive information about waiting times.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras can expect a substantive reply to his question about hospital waiting lists to which a holding answer was given on 23 March, *Official Report*, columns *75-76*.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member today.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out, region by region, district health authority in-patient waiting lists, the total population living in each district, the percentage which the former represents of the latter and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c.*76*]: Information on in-patient waiting lists, and total resident populations is given in the following table. A significant, though varying, proportion of patients on the waiting list are referred by general practitioners in other districts. The relevant population for comparison is therefore the "catchment" population which can, and in many cases does, vary substantially from the resident population. The percentage figures may therefore have little significance, and any national ranking based on them may be seriously misleading.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list at 30 September 1986 and resident population (mid 1985) with total cases as a percentage of population

District Health Authority	*Total cases*	*Resident population (hundreds)*	*Total cases as a percentage of resident population*
Northern Regional Health Authority			
Hartlepool	1,461	916	1·6
North Tees	925	1,758	0·5
South Tees	5,996	2,925	2·0
East Cumbria	3,253	1,766	1·8
South Cumbria	1,333	1,715	0·8
West Cumbria	1,215	1,363	0·9
Darlington	2,449	1,241	2·0
Durham	995	2,365	0·4
North West Durham	690	863	0·8
South West Durham	671	1,540	0·4
Northumberland	1,928	3,006	0·6
Gateshead	1,262	2,081	0·6
Newcastle	9,140	2,822	3·2
North Tyneside	1,066	1,932	0·6
South Tyneside	756	1,576	0·5
Sunderland	3,740	2,988	1·3
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority			
Hull	6,797	3,103	2·2
East Yorkshire	1,365	1,866	0·7
Grimsby	1,369	1,597	0·9
Scunthorpe	2,907	1,934	1·5
Northallerton	784	1,126	0·7
York	2,572	2,593	1·0
Scarborough	1,769	1,426	1·2
Harrogate	1,759	1,339	1·3
Bradford	6,874	3,388	2·0
Airedale	2,404	1,729	1·4
Calderdale	972	1,917	0·5
Huddersfield	2,200	2,125	1·0
Dewsbury	560	1,644	0·3
Leeds Western	4,476	3,601	1·2
Leeds Eastern	5,144	3,504	1·5
Wakefield	2,216	1,422	1·6
Pontefract	2,429	1,680	1·4
Trent Regional Health Authority			
North Derbyshire	2,652	3,610	0·7
Southern Derbyshire	6,350	5,220	1·2
Leicestershire	8,169	8,722	0·9
North Lincolnshire	2,672	2,657	1·0
South Lincolnshire	4,169	2,946	1·4
Bassetlaw	897	1,042	0·9
Central Nottinghamshire	5,754	2,851	2·0
Nottingham	7,570	6,166	1·2
Barnsley	2,371	2,233	1·1
Doncaster	4,851	2,885	1·7
Rotherham	4,385	2,527	1·7
Sheffield	11,002	5,387	2·0
East Anglian Regional Health Authority			
Cambridge	4,953	2,686	1·8
Peterborough	3,634	1,966	1·8
West Suffolk	2,592	2,249	1·2

District Health Authority	Total cases	Resident population (hundreds)	Total cases as a percentage of resident population
East Suffolk	3,336	3,152	1·1
Norwich	6,936	4,606	1·5
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	3,484	1,920	1·8
West Norfolk and Wisbech	2,105	1,813	1·2
Huntingdon	820	1,255	0·7
North-West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North Bedfordshire	2,039	2,420	0·8
South Bedfordshire	2,354	2,747	0·9
North Hertfordshire	3,035	1,866	1·6
East Hertfordshire	1,197	2,927	0·4
North West Hertfordshire	1,896	2,617	0·7
South West Hetfordshire	2,054	2,451	0·8
Barnet	4,059	3,012	1·3
Harrow	1,257	2,017	0·6
Hillingdon	7,790	2,321	3·4
Hounslow and Spelthorne	5,337	2,858	1·9
Ealing	1,815	2,924	0·6
Brent	1,997	2,549	0·8
Paddington and North Kensington	3,289	1,226	2·7
Riverside	5,591	2,884	1·9
North-East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Basildon and Thurrock	6,071	2,807	2·2
Mid Essex	5,049	2,838	1·8
North East Essex	3,532	2,950	1·2
West Essex	4,861	2,551	1·9
Southend	3,414	3,191	1·1
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	6,636	4,581	1·4
Hampstead	2,668	1,073	2·5
Bloomsbury	14,733	1,297	11·4
Islington	2,509	1,679	1·5
City and Hackney	7,112	1,926	3·7
Newham	1,188	2,086	0·6
Tower Hamlets	7,021	1,471	4·8
Enfield	2,997	2,650	1·1
Haringey	928	1,972	0·5
Redbridge	2,095	2,280	0·9
Waltham Forest	4,112	2,162	1·9
South-East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Brighton	3,762	2,970	1·3
Eastbourne	2,745	2,236	1·2
Hastings	2,951	1,618	1·8
South East Kent	2,601	2,616	1·0
Canterbury and Thanet	4,507	2,996	1·5
Dartford and Gravesham	4,434	2,214	2·0
Maidstone	2,410	1,941	1·2
Medway	3,202	3,223	1·0
Tunbridge Wells	4,869	1,962	2·5
Bexley	1,535	2,185	0·7
Greenwich	2,805	2,162	1·3
Bromley	2,107	2,979	0·7
West Lambeth	7,702	1,626	4·7
Camberwell	2,616	2,120	1·2
Lewisham and North Southwark	8,522	3,172	2·7
South-West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North West Surrey	2,706	2,081	1·3
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	4,440	2,770	1·6
South West Surrey	3,041	1,835	1·7
Mid Surrey	2,490	1,667	1·5
East Surrey	1,935	1,861	1·0
Chichester	2,508	1,757	1·4
Mid Downs	2,190	2,719	0·8
Worthing	3,195	2,401	1·3
Croydon	2,146	3,190	0·7
Kingston and Esher	2,619	1,794	1·5
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	3,233	2,299	1·4
Wandsworth	2,838	1,904	1·5
Merton and Sutton	2,732	3,341	0·8
Wessex Regional Health Authority			
East Dorset	5,585	4,348	1·3
West Dorset	1,992	1,929	1·0

District Health Authority	Total cases	Resident population (hundreds)	Total cases as a percentage of resident population
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	7,139	5,243	1·4
Southampton and South West Hampshire	8,385	4,140	2·0
Winchester	2,484	2,082	1·2
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	2,764	2,144	1·3
Salisbury	4,335	1,221	3·6
Swindon	2,924	2,245	1·3
Bath	5,535	3,958	1·4
Isle of Wight	1,583	1,229	1·3
Oxford Regional Health Authority			
East Berkshire	7,670	3,598	2·1
West Berkshire	4,508	4,367	1·0
Aylesbury Vale	3,416	1,394	2·5
Wycombe	1,181	2,721	0·4
Milton Keynes	2,464	1,532	1·6
Kettering	3,201	2,498	1·3
Northampton	5,020	2,963	1·7
Oxfordshire	5,789	5,300	1·1
South-Western Regional Health Authority			
Bristol and Weston	8,319	3,628	2·3
Frenchay	3,378	2,188	1·5
Southmead	1,760	2,309	0·8
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	4,938	4,438	1·1
Exeter	4,639	3,009	1·5
North Devon	1,487	1,299	1·1
Plymouth	5,453	3,248	1·7
Torbay	2,042	2,324	0·9
Cheltenham	2,126	2,069	1·0
Gloucester	4,464	3,045	1·5
Somerset	5,080	3,945	1·3
West Midlands Regional Health Authority			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	2,003	1,627	1·2
Herefordshire	2,890	1,527	1·9
Kidderminster and District	1,329	1,011	1·3
Worcester and District	3,276	2,343	1·4
Shropshire	8,161	3,903	2·1
Mid Staffordshire	1,609	3,061	0·5
North Staffordshire	9,159	4,630	2·0
South East Staffordshire	2,721	2,513	1·1
Rugby	553	856	0·6
North Warwickshire	2,006	1,727	1·2
South Warwickshire	2,871	2,214	1·3
Central Birmingham	5,448	1,799	3·0
East Birmingham	3,367	2,017	1·7
North Birmingham	1,564	1,634	1·0
South Birmingham	7,794	2,491	3·1
West Birmingham	4,100	2,134	1·9
Coventry	5,729	3,122	1·8
Dudley	3,960	3,008	1·3
Sandwell	1,425	3,033	0·5
Solihull	2,016	2,019	1·0
Walsall	2,758	2,629	1·0
Wolverhampton	4,522	2,532	1·8
Mersey Regional Health Authority			
Chester	2,114	1,779	1·2
Crewe	4,600	2,457	1·9
Halton	268	1,423	0·2
Macclesfield	880	1,784	0·5
Warrington	1,824	1,792	1·0
Liverpool	8,657	4,915	1·8
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,955	3,546	1·1
Southport and Formby	1,179	1,180	1·0
South Sefton	3,519	1,804	2·0
Wirral	3,130	3,554	0·9
North-Western Regional Health Authority			
Lancaster	2,264	1,285	1·8
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	4,477	3,173	1·4
Preston	4,399	1,244	3·5
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	2,401	2,723	0·9
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	2,386	2,301	1·0
West Lancashire	2,210	1,075	2·1

District Health Authority	Total cases	Resident population (hundreds)	Total cases as a percentage of resident population
Chorley and South Ribble	720	1,927	0·4
Bolton	2,835	2,612	1·1
Bury	711	1,733	0·4
North Manchester	2,609	1,468	1·8
Central Manchester	6,104	1,260	4·8
South Manchester	5,942	1,783	3·3
Oldham	4,670	2,197	2·1
Rochdale	2,798	2,136	1·3
Salford	4,378	2,400	1·8
Stockport	4,367	2,912	1·5
Tameside and Glossop	1,614	2,449	0·7
Trafford	1,637	2,178	0·8
Wigan	4,621	3,067	1·5

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will set out, region by region, the hospital urgent in-patient waiting list in each district, together with the number of urgent cases waiting more than a month, the percentage the latter presents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage;

(2) if he will set out, region by region, the hospital non-urgent in-patient waiting list in each health district together with the number of non-urgent cases waiting more than a year, the percentage the latter represents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. 76.]: Information on the numbers of urgent cases and non-urgent cases in each district and the percentages waiting over a month and a year respectively are given in the following tables. National ranking according to these percentages would be misleading since in many districts the actual numbers waiting are very low. Nor is there any common definition of what constitutes an "urgent" case. That means that comparison between districts, even in terms of actual numbers, has little significance.

Number of urgent cases and number of urgent cases waiting for more than one month on in-patient waiting list at 30 September 1986 with over one month cases as a percentage of all cases

District Health Authority	Total urgent cases	Number waiting over one month	Percentage of urgent cases waiting over one month
Northern Regional Health Authority			
Hartlepool	45	5	11·1
North Tees	0	0	—
South Tees	137	48	35·0
East Cumbria	4	1	25·0
South Cumbria	3	1	33·3
West Cumbria	32	7	21·9
Darlington	11	10	90·9
Durham	30	7	23·3
North West Durham	11	0	0·0
South West Durham	0	0	—
Northumberland	207	175	84·5
Gateshead	26	13	50·0
Newcastle	1,304	855	65·6
North Tyneside	6	0	0·0
South Tyneside	0	0	—
Sunderland	139	112	80·6
Yorkshire Regional Heath Authority			
Hull	0	0	—
East Yorkshire	0	0	—
Grimsby	11	0	0·0
Scunthorpe	0	0	—
Northallerton	0	0	—
York	12	0	0·0
Scarborough	34	8	23·5
Harrogate	29	15	51·7
Bradford	186	89	47·8
Airdale	102	72	70·6
Calderdale	11	0	0·0
Huddersfield	0	0	—
Dewsbury	5	0	0·0
Leeds Western	443	341	77·0
Leeds Eastern	493	433	87·8
Wakefield	29	8	27·6
Pontefract	369	293	79·4

District Health Authority	Total urgent cases	Number waiting over one month	Percentage of urgent cases waiting over one month
Trent Regional Health Authority			
North Derbyshire	125	42	33·6
Southern Derbyshire	219	117	53·4
Leicestershire	875	352	40·2
North Lincolnshire	89	48	53·9
South Lincolnshire	134	63	47·0
Bassetlaw	45	32	71·1
Central Nottinghamshire	137	36	26·3
Nottingham	52	13	25·0
Barnsley	90	10	11·1
Doncaster	426	255	59·9
Rotherham	105	49	46·7
Sheffield	1,515	1,008	66·5
East Anglian Regional Health Authority			
Cambridge	638	418	65·5
Peterborough	62	40	64·5
West Suffolk	53	34	64·2
East Suffolk	152	68	44·7
Norwich	1,227	942	76·8
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	288	240	83·3
West Norfolk and Wisbech	9	0	0·0
Huntingdon	79	44	55·7
North-West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North Bedfordshire	2	2	100·0
South Bedfordshire	1	0	0·0
North Hertfordshire	33	15	45·5
East Hertfordshire	8	0	0·0
North West Hertfordshire	9	0	0·0
South West Hertfordshire	29	25	86·2
Barnet	543	158	29·1
Harrow	4	4	100·0
Hillingdon	803	512	63·8
Hounslow and Spelthorne	303	160	52·8
Ealing	364	316	86·8
Brent	19	9	47·4
Paddington and North Kensington	151	121	80·1
Riverside	813	751	92·4
North-East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Basildon and Thurrock	963	705	73·2
Mid Essex	239	142	59·4
North East Essex	284	158	55·6
West Essex	96	79	82·3
Southend	695	398	57·3
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	143	67	46·9
Hampstead	43	23	53·5
Bloomsbury	702	154	21·9
Islington	404	336	83·2
City and Hackney	2,571	1,322	51·4
Newham	73	65	89·0
Tower Hamlets	1,629	1,400	85·9
Enfield	53	1	1·9
Haringey	113	30	26·5
Redbridge	95	83	87·4
Waltham Forest	97	50	51·5
South-East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Brighton	162	64	39·5
Eastbourne	67	40	59·7
Hastings	147	98	66·7
South East Kent	5	0	0·0
Canterbury and Thanet	387	157	40·6
Dartford and Gravesham	35	1	2·9
Maidstone	78	40	51·3
Medway	138	60	43·5
Tunbridge Wells	318	213	67·0
Bexley	0	0	—
Greenwich	34	0	0·0
Bromley	40	0	0·0
West Lambeth	1,796	735	40·9
Camberwell	178	83	46·6
Lewisham and North Southwark	973	778	80·0

District Health Authority	Total urgent cases	Number waiting over one month	Percentage of urgent cases waiting over one month
South-West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North West Surrey	52	32	61·5
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	1,415	960	67·8
South West Surrey	99	15	15·2
Mid Surrey	42	12	28·6
East Surrey	195	54	27·7
Chichester	125	77	61·6
Mid Downs	114	45	39·5
Worthing	331	199	60·1
Croydon	96	52	54·2
Kingston and Esher	336	209	62·2
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	169	119	70·4
Wandsworth	298	129	43·3
Merton and Sutton	307	145	47·2
Wessex Regional Health Authority			
East Dorset	1,050	692	65·9
West Dorset	199	157	78·9
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	381	163	42·8
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1,118	735	65·7
Winchester	114	23	20·2
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	46	20	43·5
Salisbury	191	73	38·2
Swindon	52	9	17·3
Bath	464	353	76·1
Isle of Wight	9	0	0·0
Oxford Regional Health Authority			
East Berkshire	499	374	74·9
West Berkshire	164	57	34·8
Aylesbury Vale	41	21	51·2
Wycombe	24	0	0·0
Milton Keynes	62	34	54·8
Kettering	89	66	74·2
Northampton	750	647	86·3
Oxfordshire	148	24	16·2
South-Western Regional Health Authority			
Bristol and Weston	769	303	39·4
Frenchay	89	31	34·8
Southmead	34	13	38·2
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	257	197	76·7
Exeter	174	89	51·1
North Devon	15	0	0·0
Plymouth	112	39	34·8
Torbay	40	33	82·5
Cheltenham	1	1	100·0
Gloucester	306	130	42·5
Somerset	846	459	54·3
West Midlands Regional Health Authority			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	25	2	8·0
Herefordshire	84	67	79·8
Kidderminster and District	19	0	0·0
Worcester and District	59	42	71·2
Shropshire	385	235	61·0
Mid Staffordshire	212	34	16·0
North Staffordshire	1,095	897	81·9
South East Staffordshire	30	24	80·0
Rugby	0	0	—
North Warwickshire	28	4	14·3
South Warwickshire	46	27	58·7
Central Birmingham	722	573	79·4
East Birmingham	415	262	63·1
North Birmingham	63	5	7·9
South Birmingham	1,011	895	88·5
West Birmingham	119	80	67·2
Coventry	535	339	63·4
Dudley	116	47	40·5
Sandwell	0	0	—
Solihull	5	5	100·0
Walsall	24	11	45·8
Wolverhampton	154	121	78·6

District Health Authority	Total urgent cases	Number waiting over one month	Percentage of urgent cases waiting over one month
Mersey Regional Health Authority			
Chester	77	21	27·3
Crewe	209	172	82·3
Halton	0	0	—
Macclesfield	147	93	63·3
Warrington	19	18	94·7
Liverpool	504	344	68·3
St. Helens and Knowsley	75	49	65·3
Southport and Formby	0	0	—
South Sefton	64	25	39·1
Wirral	114	47	41·2
North-Western Regional Health Authority			
Lancaster	32	5	15·6
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	620	498	80·3
Preston	56	10	17·9
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	18	1	5·6
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	306	250	81·7
West Lancashire	12	0	0·0
Chorley and South Ribble	6	1	16·7
Bolton	85	59	69·4
Bury	0	0	—
North Manchester	81	37	45·7
Central Manchester	157	74	47·1
South Manchester	582	148	25·4
Oldham	366	270	73·8
Rochdale	108	68	63·0
Salford	244	49	20·1
Stockport	440	319	72·5
Tameside and Glossop	120	54	45·0
Trafford	12	4	33·3
Wigan	28	8	28·6

Number of non-urgent cases and number of non-urgent cases waiting for more than one month on in-patient waiting list at 30 September 1986 with over one month cases as a percentage of all non-urgent cases

District Health Authority	Total non-urgent cases	Number waiting over one year	Percentage of non-urgent cases waiting over one year
Northern Regional Health Authority			
Hartlepool	1,416	300	21·2
North Tees	925	24	2·6
South Tees	5,859	1,671	28·5
East Cumbria	3,249	843	25·9
South Cumbria	1,330	253	19·0
West Cumbria	1,183	114	9·6
Darlington	2,438	612	25·1
Durham	965	71	7·4
North West Durham	679	138	20·3
South West Durham	671	104	15·5
Northumberland	1,721	318	18·5
Gateshead	1,236	196	15·9
Newcastle	7,836	1,159	14·8
North Tyneside	1,060	134	12·6
South Tyneside	756	66	8·7
Sunderland	3,601	423	11·7
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority			
Hull	6,797	2,434	35·8
East Yorkshire	1,365	259	19·0
Grimsby	1,358	111	8·2
Scunthorpe	2,907	801	27·6
Northallerton	784	6	0·8
York	2,560	246	9·6
Scarborough	1,735	130	7·5
Harrogate	1,730	210	12·1
Bradford	6,688	1,422	21·3
Airedale	2,302	777	33·8
Calderdale	961	68	7·1
Huddersfield	2,200	286	13·0
Dewsbury	555	123	22·2
Leeds Western	4,033	736	18·2
Leeds Eastern	4,651	962	20·7
Wakefield	2,187	190	8·7

District Health Authority	Total non-urgent cases	Number waiting over one year	Percentage of non-urgent cases waiting over one year
Pontefract	2,060	559	27·1
Trent Regional Health Authority			
North Derbyshire	2,527	818	32·4
Southern Derbyshire	6,131	982	16·0
Leicestershire	7,294	1,146	15·7
North Lincolnshire	2,583	372	14·4
South Lincolnshire	4,035	1,370	34·0
Bassetlaw	852	158	18·5
Central Nottinghamshire	5,617	2,413	43·0
Nottingham	7,518	2,150	28·6
Barnsley	2,281	214	9·4
Doncaster	4,425	1,378	31·1
Rotherham	4,280	1,509	35·3
Sheffield	8,487	3,601	38·0
East Anglian Regional Health Authority			
Cambridge	4,315	1,580	36·6
Peterborough	3,572	519	14·5
West Suffolk	2,539	536	21·1
East Suffolk	3,184	664	20·9
Norwich	5,709	2,192	38·4
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	3,196	1,018	31·9
West Norfolk and Wisbech	2,096	263	12·5
Huntingdon	741	21	2·8
North-West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North Bedfordshire	2,037	595	29·2
South Bedfordshire	2,353	286	12·2
North Hertfordshire	3,002	772	25·7
East Hertfordshire	1,189	67	5·6
North West Hertfordshire	1,887	109	5·8
South West Hertfordshire	2,025	231	11·4
Barnet	3,516	840	23·9
Harrow	1,253	95	7·6
Hillingdon	6,987	4,049	58·0
Hounslow and Spelthorne	5,034	1,269	25·2
Ealing	1,451	976	67·3
Brent	1,978	267	13·5
Paddington and North Kensington	3,138	367	11·7
Riverside	4,778	914	19·1
North-East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Basildon and Thurrock	5,108	2,485	48·6
Mid Essex	4,810	1,027	21·4
North East Essex	3,248	437	13·5
West Essex	4,765	914	19·2
Southend	2,719	735	27·0
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	6,493	2,696	41·5
Hampstead	2,625	714	27·2
Bloomsbury	14,031	3,495	24·9
Islington	2,105	709	33·7
City and Hackney	4,541	1,732	38·1
Newham	1,115	165	14·8
Tower Hamlets	5,392	3,046	56·5
Enfield	2,944	717	24·4
Haringey	815	67	8·2
Redbridge	2,000	357	17·9
Waltham Forest	4,015	747	18·6
South-East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Brighton	3,600	665	18·5
Eastbourne	2,678	616	23·0
Hastings	2,804	493	17·6
South East Kent	2,596	246	9·5
Canterbury and Thanet	4,120	932	22·6
Dartford and Gravesham	4,399	850	19·3
Maidstone	2,332	455	19·5
Medway	3,064	446	14·6
Tunbridge Wells	4,551	1,622	35·6
Bexley	1,535	116	7·6
Greenwich	2,771	453	16·3
Bromley	2,067	534	25·8
West Lambeth	5,906	2,864	48·5
Camberwell	2,438	313	12·8

District Health Authority	Total non-urgent cases	Number waiting over one year	Percentage of non-urgent cases waiting over one year
Lewisham and North Southwark	7,549	2,268	30·0
South-West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North West Surrey	2,654	418	15·7
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	3,025	731	24·2
South West Surrey	2,942	649	22·1
Mid Surrey	2,448	910	37·2
East Surrey	1,740	327	18·8
Chichester	2,383	834	35·0
Mid Downs	2,076	277	13·3
Worthing	2,864	663	23·1
Croydon	2,050	261	12·7
Kingston and Esher	2,283	889	38·9
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	3,064	1,685	55·0
Wandsworth	2,540	366	14·4
Merton and Sutton	2,425	281	11·6
Wessex Regional Health Authority			
East Dorset	4,535	869	19·2
West Dorset	1,793	379	21·1
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	6,758	1,395	20·6
Southampton and South West Hampshire	7,267	2,285	31·4
Winchester	2,370	738	31·1
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	2,718	614	22·6
Salisbury	4,144	1,359	32·8
Swindon	2,872	359	12·5
Bath	5,071	1,333	26·3
Isle of Wight	1,574	93	5·9
Oxfordshire Regional Health Authority			
East Berkshire	7,171	2,419	33·7
West Berkshire	4,344	655	15·1
Aylesbury Vale	3,375	1,376	40·8
Wycombe	1,157	102	8·8
Milton Keynes	2,402	677	28·2
Kettering	3,112	825	26·5
Northampton	4,270	1,647	38·6
Oxfordshire	5,641	855	15·2
South-Western Regional Health Authority			
Bristol and Weston	7,550	1,369	18·1
Frenchay	3,289	1,775	54·0
Southmead	1,726	392	22·7
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	4,681	1,517	32·4
Exeter	4,465	759	17·0
North Devon	1,472	158	10·7
Plymouth	5,341	1,627	30·5
Torbay	2,002	404	20·2
Cheltenham	2,125	617	29·0
Gloucester	4,158	1,065	25·6
Somerset	4,234	1,427	33·7
West Midlands Regional Health Authority			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,978	369	18·7
Herefordshire	2,806	869	31·0
Kidderminster and District	1,310	148	11·3
Worcester and District	3,217	598	18·6
Shropshire	7,776	2,299	29·6
Mid Staffordshire	1,397	294	21·0
North Staffordshire	8,064	2,976	36·9
South East Staffordshire	2,691	337	12·5
Rugby	553	92	16·6
North Warwickshire	1,978	449	22·7
South Warwickshire	2,825	917	32·5
Central Birmingham	4,726	1,231	26·0
East Birmingham	2,952	1,369	46·4
North Birmingham	1,501	317	21·1
South Birmingham	6,783	3,620	53·4
West Birmingham	3,981	1,101	27·7
Coventry	5,194	1,874	36·1
Dudley	3,844	889	23·1
Sandwell	1,425	145	10·2
Solihull	2,011	469	23·3
Walsall	2,734	699	25·6
Wolverhampton	4,368	1,108	25·4

District Health Authority	Total non-urgent cases	Number waiting over one year	Percentage of non-urgent cases waiting over one year
Mersey Regional Health Authority			
Chester	2,037	303	14·9
Crewe	4,391	2,088	47·6
Halton	268	7	2·6
Macclesfield	733	230	31·4
Warrington	1,805	437	24·2
Liverpool	8,153	1,445	17·7
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,880	971	25·0
Southport and Formby	1,179	296	25·1
South Sefton	3,455	544	15·7
Wirral	3,016	336	11·1
North-Western Regional Health Authority			
Lancaster	2,232	522	23·4
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	3,857	821	21·3
Preston	4,343	1,412	32·5
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	2,383	495	20·8
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	2,080	677	32·5
West Lancashire	2,198	364	16·6
Chorley and South Ribble	714	272	38·1
Bolton	2,750	631	22·9
Bury	711	21	3·0
North Manchester	2,528	350	13·8
Central Manchester	5,947	1,332	22·4
South Manchester	5,360	1,261	23·5
Oldham	4,304	1,979	46·0
Rochdale	2,690	876	32·6
Salford	4,134	1,015	24·6
Stockport	3,927	1,194	30·4
Tameside and Glossop	1,494	258	17·3
Trafford	1,625	116	7·1
Wigan	4,593	1,262	27·5

SCOTLAND

Housing Stock

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimate of the value of the housing stock in Scotland in April 1986 and of the percentage increase in value since then; what are the comparable rateable values; and what is his estimate of the amount collected in rates on dwellings in the year 1986-87.

Mr. Ancram: Information on the market value of housing stock in Scotland is not held centrally. The total rateable value of domestic subjects in Scotland as at 1 April 1986 was £1,327 million. Information regarding any increase since then is not yet available. The estimated amount collected in rates on domestic subjects in 1986-87 was £527 million.

Drug Abuse (Edinburgh and Lothian)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will finance urgent studies into the co-factors affecting drug abuse and AIDS identifiable in the drug abusing population in Edinburgh and Lothian region since 1983.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Home and Health Department is at present providing funding for seven relevant projects in this general area of research, of which four have direct relevance to the drug abuse population in Edinburgh and Lothian region. In addition, additional relevant studies have recently been funded by the Medical Research Council and further proposals are under assessment.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange for urgent studies into the possibilities for, and effects of, treatment on HIV infected babies identified in and near Edinburgh since 1983.

Mr. John MacKay: All the known HIV infected babies in or near Edinburgh are to be included in a research study which is under assessment by the Medical Research Council. My officials will be involved with that assessment.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will finance urgent studies into the transmission of HIV from mothers to children in Edinburgh and Lothian since 1983.

Mr. John MacKay: Discussions between my officials, the Medical Research Council and the Lothian and Tayside health boards are likely to lead to proposals for research in due course.

Road Works (Objectors)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to release the names of objectors to trunk road alterations and bypasses to hon. Members as well as public inquiries.

Mr. Ancram: No; the degree of confidentiality which those opposing trunk road schemes can expect at present is a valuable safeguard of their rights. It ensures that people are not deterred from lodging objections by fear of pressure being brought to bear on them by other interested parties. Where a public inquiry is held, however, there is

no option but to make public the names of those who have maintained their objections, since the proceedings are held in public.

Children's Panels

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for what purpose he introduced rule 13 for the conduct of children's panels relating to the custody of persons by police or prison officers; and on what date did it become effective.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1987, c. *214*]: The rule was introduced so that an escorting officer who considers that he must accompany his prisoner throughout a children's hearing shall have the right to be present in the hearing room. It remains open to the chairman of a hearing to suggest to an escorting officer that he should remain outside to allow the hearing to proceed with maximum privacy. Chief constables and prison authorities have been asked to ensure that such requests are treated sympathetically, where possible. The new rule became operative on 2 February 1987.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reason did he not reappoint from the children's panels in Ayrshire Mr. Alexander Baird and Mr. Ian Bigham; on what date this action became effective; and what representations he has received on this matter.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1987, c. *214*]: Mr. Baird's term of appointment ended on 18 May 1986 and I accepted a recommendation from the Children's Panel Advisory Committee that he should not be offered a further term. Mr. Bigham was removed from office on 9 September 1986. I shall write to the hon. Member about the background to these decisions.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the powers of the children's panels in relation to access to all relevant files on the children appearing before them, or their families; on whose discretion panel members are given access to such files; and what is the authority for this arrangement.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1987, c. *214*]: The reporter to the children's panel is required to make such initial investigations as he thinks necessary of any case of a child which is referred to him. If he refers a case to a children's hearing, he is required under the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Rules 1986 to provide the hearing members, in advance, with copies of any information or document which is material to the consideration of the case before the hearing. Members of children's panels have no other statutory rights of access to the reporter's records.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on revenue in a full year at 1987-88 rates of taxing men and women separately, with personal allowances and the married women's earnings allowance replaced by a non-transferable personal allowance of £2,425; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by range of income and for one and two-earner families the gains and losses for (i) earned income and (ii) unearned income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue yield from giving a non-transferable personal allowance of £2,425 to each partner in a married couple would be £4·3 billion in a full year at 1987-88 income levels. The table shows the gains and losses by range of total income. It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for earned and investment income separately.

Effect of non-transferable allowances[1] at 1987-88 income levels

Total income (lower limit) £ per week	*Paying less tax* *Numbers thousands*	*Annual tax change £ million*	*Paying more tax* *Numbers thousands*	*Annual tax change £ million*	*Annual tax change £ million*
Married couples—both earning					
Under 60	—	—	10	—	—
60 to 100	—	—	280	65	65
100 to 150	—	—	580	245	245
150 to 200	5	[2]negligible	800	340	340
200 to 300	5	[2]negligible	2,190	845	845
300 to 400	10	[2]negligible	1,610	600	600
Over 400	90	−55	1,190	430	370
All	120	−60	6,650	2,525	2,465
Married couples—one earning					
Under 60	—	—	180	15	15
60 to 100	—	—	705	195	195
100 to 150	5	[2]negligible	1,100	360	360
150 to 200	—	—	1,110	390	390
200 to 300	40	−5	1,635	575	575
300 to 400	25	−5	55	196	180
Over 400	55	−70	390	220	150
All	120	−80	5,640	1,950	1,870
BOTH GROUPS	240	−140	12,290	4,475	4,335

[1] At £2,425 for both aged and non-aged.
[2] Negligible means less than £3 million.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the saving to the Exchequer in a full year at 1987-88 rates of restricting all allowances and reliefs to the standard rate of tax; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figure in the *Official Report* by category of allowance and relief.

Mr. Clay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update for 1987-88 the information on the extra revenue resulting from allowing all tax allowances and reliefs at the standard rate only, provided in his reply of 1 May 1986 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) *Official Report*, columns *479-80*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *76*]: The direct revenue cost at 1987-88 levels of income of allowing personal tax allowances at rates in excess of the basic rate of income tax is estimated to be about £850 million. Information on the similar cost of other income tax reliefs is available only in respect of mortgage interest, retirement annuity premiums, employees' superannuation contributions, the business expansion scheme, and donations to charities; in total it is about £750 million. Within this total is a cost of about £340 million for mortgage interest relief and about £130 million for retirement annuity premiums. It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for the other individual reliefs. Nor is it possible to estimate precisely the combined yield from restricting these reliefs and personal allowances to the basic rate, but it is thought to be about £1,800 million. These estimates make no allowance for any possible behavioural effects if allowances and reliefs were to be restricted to the basic rate.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will construct an index, with 1978-79 equalling 100, of the changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions for each subsequent year for a taxpayer on *(a)* half, *(b)* two thirds, *(c)* average, *(d)* five times and *(e)* 10 times average earnings for households where the taxpayer is *(i)* single, *(ii)* married, no children, *(iii)* married with two children and *(iv)* married with four children, in all cases assuming the wife does not work, using a similar form to his answer of 27 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns *606-8*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *579*]: The following table shows *(a)* income tax plus national insurance contributions less child benefit, where appropriate, as a percentage of gross earnings; and *(b)* real net income after tax, NIC and child benefit in index number form with 1978-79 equalling 100. The calculations assume that the taxpayer has no reliefs other than the appropriate personal allowance and that national insurance contributions are at the contracted-in rate. Average earnings are those for full-time males paid at adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence. Figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are provisional.

Multiple of average earnings

	Half		*Two-thirds*		*One*		*Five*		*Ten*	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
Single										
1978-79	23·5	100·0	27·5	100·0	31·5	100·0	52·2	100·0	67·5	100·0
1979-80	22·9	102·6	29·7	103·4	29·7	104·4	42·8	121·6	51·4	151·8
1980-81	24·7	103·5	27·7	104·9	30·7	106·3	44·3	122·5	52·1	154·6
1981-82	26·9	100·1	29·6	101·7	32·3	103·5	46·4	117·3	53·2	150·5
1982-83	27·3	100·3	30·1	101·7	33·0	103·2	45·9	119·3	53·0	152·5
1983-84	27·0	104·6	30·0	105·8	33·0	107·1	45·1	125·7	52·5	159·6
1984-85	26·5	108·4	29·6	109·5	32·7	110·7	45·3	129·0	52·6	164·0
1985-86	26·2	110·3	29·4	111·3	32·6	112·4	45·5	130·3	52·7	166·8
1986-87	25·8	115·4	28·8	116·8	31·9	118·3	45·6	135·2	52·8	172·3
1987-88	24·9	119·6	27·7	121·5	30·5	123·7	45·8	138·2	52·9	176·3
Married										
1978-79	16·0	100·0	21·9	100·0	27·8	100·0	50·5	100·0	66·5	100·0
1979-80	16·0	101·7	21·1	102·7	26·3	103·8	41·5	120·2	50·7	149·6
1980-81	17·9	102·7	22·6	104·1	27·3	105·7	42·9	121·1	51·5	152·3
1981-82	20·8	98·7	25·0	100·5	29·3	102·5	45·2	115·8	52·6	148·1
1982-83	20·8	99·4	25·3	100·9	29·8	102·5	44·6	118·0	52·3	150·2
1983-84	20·1	104·1	24·9	105·3	29·6	106·7	43·7	124·4	51·9	157·3
1984-85	19·3	108·3	24·2	109·3	29·2	110·5	43·9	127·8	51·9	161·8
1985-86	18·9	110·3	23·9	111·2	29·0	112·3	44·0	129·2	52·0	163·7
1986-87	18·9	114·9	23·7	116·2	28·4	117·8	44·2	134·0	52·1	170·1
1987-88	18·7	118·0	23·0	120·1	27·3	122·5	44·4	136·8	52·2	173·9
Married with 2 children (both under 11)										
1978-79	2·4	100·0	11·5	100·0	20·9	100·0	48·8	100·0	65·6	100·0
1979-80	1·4	102·8	10·2	103·3	18·9	104·1	40·0	119·1	50·0	147·9
1980-81	4·9	102·4	12·9	103·5	20·8	105·1	41·6	119·7	50·8	150·3
1981-82	7·3	99·5	14·9	100·7	22·5	102·5	43·9	114·6	51·9	146·3
1982-83	6·9	100·6	14·9	101·5	22·8	102·8	43·2	116·8	51·6	148·4
1983-84	5·9	105·6	14·2	106·2	22·4	107·2	42·3	123·2	51·2	155·5
1984-85	5·0	109·8	13·5	110·2	22·0	111·1	42·4	126·6	51·2	159·9
1985-86	5·0	111·2	13·5	111·6	22·0	112·5	42·6	127·9	51·3	161·7
1986-87	5·7	115·0	13·7	116·0	21·8	117·5	42·9	132·5	51·4	167·9
1987-88	5·9	117·5	13·4	119·2	21·0	121·7	43·1	135·3	51·5	171·6

	Half		Two-thirds		One		Five		Ten	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Married with 4 children (two under 11, one 11-15 and one over 16)										
1978-79	−11·7	100·0	0·2	100·0	13·3	100·0	46·7	100·0	64·5	100·0
1979-80	−13·3	103·1	−0·8	102·7	11·6	103·6	38·5	117·3	49·3	145·5
1980-81	−8·1	101·7	3·1	102·0	14·3	103·8	40·3	117·7	50·2	147·7
1981-82	−6·2	99·5	4·8	99·8	15·8	101·7	42·5	112·9	51·3	143·9
1982-83	−7·0	101·0	4·5	100·9	15·9	102·3	41·8	115·1	50·9	146·0
1983-84	−8·4	106·1	3·5	105·8	14·3	106·9	40·9	121·4	50·4	153·0
1984-85	−9·3	110·3	2·8	109·8	14·8	110·7	41·0	124·8	50·5	157·4
1985-86	−8·9	111·3	3·1	110·8	15·1	111·8	41·2	126·0	50·6	159·1
1986-87	−7·6	114·5	3·8	114·6	15·2	116·3	41·6	130·4	50·8	165·1
1987-88	−6·9	116·5	3·9	117·3	14·6	120·0	41·8	133·0	50·9	168·6

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the size of the cut in the standard rate of income tax required in 1987-88 to reduce the total tax payments, including income tax, national insurance contributions, indirect taxes, less child benefit where appropriate, for those on *(a)* three quarters and *(b)* 100 per cent. of average earnings in the categories (i) single people, (ii) married couples and (iii) married couples with two and four children in each case to (x) the same sum of money and (y) the same proportion of gross earnings as in 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *579*]: Figures for couples with four children are not available. The remaining figures are in the table.

Reductions in basic rate required in 1987-88 to restore tax payments to their 1978-79 levels

(pence)

Percentage of average earnings	*Single*	*Married*	*Married plus 2 children*
(a) Same amount in real terms			
75	14·0	17·2	15·3
100	12·4	14·2	13·5
(b) Same proportion of gross earnings			
75	2·1	3·4	5·1
100	0·9	1·6	3·4

Stamp Duty

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present rate of stamp duty on shares issued as a result of mergers and acquisitions; and if he will provide an estimate of the yield in 1986-87 of stamp duty at the rate of 1 per cent. on shares issued as a result of such mergers and acquisitions.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The present rate of capital duty is 1 per cent., but it does not apply if the consideration consists entirely, or almost entirely, of shares in the acquiring company. I regret that the information requested on yield is not available centrally and could be obtained only at undue cost.

Channel Tunnel (Duty-free Facilities)

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that duty-free facilities are made available to rail passengers utilising the Channel tunnel, commensurate with those available to cross-Channel passengers using alternative modes of transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on income tax reductions provided in his reply of 14 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, columns *314-15*;

(2) if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 21 October 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *807-8*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his replies*, 25 March 1987, c. *215-16*]: The information is in the tables. For each financial year the yield from the tax regime in that year is compared with the 1978-79 tax regime. All estimates are calculated on the 1987-88 tax base and all tax regimes have been indexed to 1987-88 by reference to the statutory formula. The comparisons therefore allow for budgetary changes in income tax rates and allowances, but not for any change since 1978-79 in the definition of the tax base.

The first table shows the total reduction (+) or increase (−) in tax yield from each income range; and the second table shows the average change for individual tax units.

As child tax allowances were being phased out in 1978-79, they have been excluded from the comparison.

Reductions (+)/Increases (−) in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

£ million

Range of total income in 1987-88	*Number units paying tax in 1987-88 (million)*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Under 5,000	3·2	70	100	−290	−240	−20	110	230	270	340
5,000—10,000	7·6	640	710	−280	−170	390	760	1,090	1,380	1,940
10,000—15,000	5·3	960	1,000	190	270	730	1,150	1,450	1,810	2,530
15,000—20,000	2·7	760	790	290	340	630	910	1,090	1,370	1,930

Range of total income in 1987-88	*Number units paying tax in 1987-88 (million)*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
20,000—30,000	1·6	1,010	980	390	460	800	1,080	1,210	1,470	1,980
30,000—50,000	0·6	1,050	970	550	600	840	1,040	1,110	1,220	1,430
Over 50,000	0·16	1,510	1,450	1,220	1,250	1,380	1,640	1,660	1,680	1,710
Total	21·2	6,000	6,010	2,060	2,500	4,740	6,690	7,850	9,200	11,870

Note: All information is in terms of tax units—that is married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

Average gain (+)/loss(−) per tax unit

(£ per annum)

Range of total income in 1987-88	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Under 5,000	20	30	−70	−60	−5	30	60	70	110
5,000—10,000	80	90	−40	−20	50	100	140	180	260
10,000—15,000	180	190	40	50	140	220	270	340	480
15,000—20,000	280	290	110	130	230	540	410	510	710
20,000—30,000	630	610	240	280	500	670	750	910	1,240
30,000—50,000	1,800	1,670	940	1,020	1,440	1,800	1,910	2,110	2,460
Over 50,000	9,460	9,070	7,640	7,790	8,610	10,220	10,380	10,490	10,710
Total	270	270	90	110	220	300	360	420	560

Note: Average gains and losses are calculated by reference to the estimated number who would pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime which is some 950,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1987-88; Of these, about 800,000 more with incomes under £5,000 and about 150,000 more with incomes between £5,000 and £10,000 would pay tax.

Taxation

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) of 28 April 1986, *Official Report*, column *329*, to cover 1987-88 as well as 1985-86 and 1986-87, in comparison to 1978-79.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on tax and national insurance provided in his reply of 9 April 1986, at columns *124-25*, to the hon. Member for Thurrock.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his replies*, 23 March 1987, c.*41*, and 25 March 1987, c. *216*]: Available information for 1987-88 is in the tables. Further information could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

Range of earnings[1] where income tax[2] and nic[3] form a smaller proportion of gross earnings in 1987-88 than in 1978-79 under the assumptions in the Footnotes below

Family type	*Range of Earnings*				
	Up to		*Other ranges*		*Over*
Single £ per week	38		43-64		159
percentage of average earnings[5]	17		18-29		69
Married Couple both working[4] No children £ per week	65	71-99	111-137	370-499	521
percentage of average earnings[5,6]	17	19-25	30-35	99-131	139
Husband only working No children £ per week	38		43-64		200
percentage of average earnings[5]	17		18-28		88
Two children £ per week	38		43-78		234
percentage of average earnings[5]	17		18-34		103
Four children £ per week	86		307-562		618
percentage of average earnings[5]	37		135-247		272

[1] In each of the ranges of percentages of average earnings shown, tax plus NIC is a smaller proportion of earnings in 1987-88 than in 1978-79. The income levels in £ per week are at 1987-88 levels, rounded to the nearest £1. It is assumed that the taxpayer has no investment income and no relief or allowance other than the appropriate personal allowance.
[2] Less child benefit, where appropriate.
[3] At contracted-in rates.
[4] On the assumption that husband and wife each have the same multiple of the appropriate all occupations figure for average earnings (full-time males and females respectively).
[5] Average earnings of full-time males (all occupations) are £92·80 in 1978-79 and £227.30 in 1987-88, for females £59.60 and £149.70 respectively.
[6] Percentage of joint income.

Single people and married couples liable to income tax whose main source of income is earnings from employment

Family Type	*1987-88 Range of income[1] £ per week*	*Numbers '000*
Single		
	Up to 38	0
	39-42	0
	43-64	730
	65-159	3,920
	Over 159	2,620
Married		
Both working		
	Up to 64	0
	65-70	0
	71-99	20
	100-110	10
	111-137	70
	138-369	3,340
	370-499	870
	500-520	60
	Over 521	510
One working		
	Up to 38	0
	39-42	0
	43-64	0
	65-200	1,470
	Over 200	2,270

[1] The income levels are those for single people and childless married couples at which, if income were all earned, tax and NIC would be the same proportion of earnings in 1978-79 and 1987-88 (see previous table). Reliable estimates which take account of the numbers of children in each family are not possible.

Reliefs and Allowances

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will show tax and national insurance in 1987-88 as a proportion of earnings, together with a breakdown of the reliefs and allowances applicable in the cases of a married man with earnings of £100,000 per annum, making an annual investment of £40,000 from his earnings under the business expansion scheme and claiming tax relief on *(a)* a mortgage loan of £30,000, assuming a monthly interest payment of £281·25, *(b)* the maximum contribution to a personal pension scheme from 4 January 1988, having no contracted-out employer's scheme prior to that date, *(c)* a life insurance policy taken out before 13 March 1984 and with an annual premium of £1,000 and *(d)* the maximum monthly tax-free investment into a personal equity plan;

(2) if he will show tax and national insurance in 1987-88 as a proportion of earnings, together with a breakdown of the reliefs and allowances applicable in the case of a married man with earnings of £30,000 per annum, and making an annual investment from his earnings of £5,000 under the business expansion scheme as well as claiming tax relief on *(a)* a mortgage loan of £30,000 assuming a monthly interest payment of £281·25, *(b)* the maximum contribution to a personal pension scheme from 4 January 1988, having no contracted-out employer's scheme prior to that date, *(c)* a life insurance policy taken out before 13 March 1984 and with an annual premium of £200 and *(d)* the maximum monthly tax-free investment into a personal equity plan;

(3) if he will show tax and national insurance in 1987-88 as a proportion of earnings, together with a breakdown of the reliefs and allowances applicable in the cases of *(a)* a married man with earnings of £100,000 per annum, *(b)* a married man on the level of average male earnings assumed for 1987 and *(c)* a single person earning £100 per week.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his replies*, 10 April 1987, c. *449-50*]: The information is in the table. It has been assumed that there are no wife's earnings and that the taxpayer has no relief or allowance available other than those specified.

National insurance contributions are assumed to be paid at contracted-in rates. Where an employee has made the maximum contribution to a personal pension scheme, he and his employer pay NI contributions at the standard contracted-in rate and the Department of Health and Social Security pays minimum contributions to his personal pension scheme equivalent to the difference between the contracted-out and contracted-in rates of NI contributions for both employer and employee. The maximum contribution to a personal pension plan is 17½ per cent. of earnings (assuming the taxpayer is aged under 50).

The maximum investment in a personal equity plan of £2,400 per annum is not relieved against income tax and therefore does not affect the calculation of income tax liability. Tax relief is given on dividends reinvested in a PEP scheme, and on capital gains made on mature plans.

Gross Earnings	*Reliefs and allowances (£ per year) set against income*							
	Personal allowance	*Business Expansion Scheme*	*Mortgage Interest Relief*	*Relief on Personal Pension Scheme[2]*	*Life Assurance Relief[3]*	*Tax liability*	*National Insurance[1] Contributions*	*Tax and NIC as a proportion of earnings per cent.*
£ per year					*£ per year*	*£ per year*	*£ per year*	
Married man								
30,000	3,795	5,000	3,375	1,312·50	30	4,429·73	1,380·60	19·4
100,000	3,795	40,000	3,375	4,375·00	150	20,581·00	1,380·60	22·0
100,000	3,795	—	—	—	—	49,381·00	1,380·60	50·8
11,820[4]	3,795	—	—	—	—	2,166·75	1,063·80	27·3
Single person								
5,200[5]	2,425	—	—	—	—	749·25	468·00	23·4

[1] At contracted-in rates. The difference between the employee's contracted-in and contracted-out payments (paid into the personal pension where this is in operation) for the three months of the personal pension scheme is £71·55.
[2] i.e. 17·5 per cent of earnings for the three months remaining of the tax year after 4th January 1988.
[3] reduction in tax due at 15 per cent. of the annual premium.
[4] i.e. £227·30 per week which is estimated average earnings for a man paid at adult rates in 1987-88.
[5] i.e. £100 per week.

Taxation (Yield)

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the yield in real terms in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* what he is now proposing for 1987-88 in (i) direct taxes, including national insurance and (ii) indirect taxes.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *577*]: The figures are as follows:

£ billion 1987-88 prices[1]

	1978-79	*1987-88*	*Change*
(a) Direct taxes	57·8	73·8	+16·0
of which Income tax	(38·9)	(40·0)	(+1·1)
(b) Indirect taxes	61·1	82·4	+21·4
(c) Total taxes, royalties and national insurance and other contributions[2]	118·9	156·3	+37·4

[1] revalued using the GDP deflator.
[2] components do not add to total because of rounding.

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield from all sources of taxation including excise and other duties for 1987-88; what was the comparable yield for 1978-79 revalued at 1987-88 prices; and if he will publish a breakdown by categories of the real increase in taxes between 1978-79 and 1987-88 similar to that in his answer of 25 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns *426-27*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *577*]: The estimated total yield from all sources of taxation including local authority rates and national insurance contributions is £156 billion in 1987-88; the yield in 1978-79 revalued at 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator is £119 billion. The other information requested is in the table.

£ billion 1987-88 prices

	Change on 1978-79
Income tax	+1·1
Non-North Sea corporation tax[1]	+5·8
Capital Taxes	+1·6
Employee's NICs	+5·5
Employer's NICs	+2·2
NIS	−4·3
LA rates	+5·1
Stamp duties	+1·2
Taxes on expenditure, excluding LA rates, NIS and stamp duties	+17·2
North Sea revenues[2]	+2·8
Others[3]	−0·8
Total change in taxes, royalties and national insurance contributions	+37·4

[1] Including mainstream and advance corporation tax.
[2] Before advance corporation tax (ACT) set-off.
[3] Adjustments for ACT set-off against North Sea corporation tax plus accruals adjustment.

Budget

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 6 April, *Official Report*, columns *67-8*, if he will give the gains per average person in each of the income ranges given from the Budget proposals *(a)* on an unindexed basis and *(b)* net of indexation.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *579*]: The information is in the table.

Range of gross income	*Number of tax units*[1] *in 1987-88*	*Average*[2] *reduction in income tax liability in 1987-88 compared with*	
		An unindexed base	*An indexed base*[3]
£	*million*	£	£
Under 5,000	3·2	50	20
5,000 to 7,500	4·0	90	60
7,500 to 10,000	3·6	130	90
10,000 to 12,500	3·0	160	120
12,500 to 15,000	2·2	200	150
15,000 to 20,000	2·7	250	200
20,000 to 30,000	1·6	410	310
30,000 to 50,000	0·6	530	330
Over 50,000	0·16	620	180
All	21·2	170	120

[1] All information is in terms of tax units i.e. married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.
[2] By reference to the number paying tax in 1987-88.
[3] That is, the 1986-87 tax regime indexed (by 3·7 per cent.) to 1987-88 levels by reference to the statutory formula.

Taxable Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply dated 6 April, *Official Report*, column *78*, concerning taxable benefits subject to special and general rules, whether he will provide an estimate for each of the three classes of the proportion of the actual value which is assessed to tax in each of the three cases together with a list of the more important items.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 April 1987, c. *54*]: The taxable value of cars and free fuel for private use provided by an employer is calculated by reference to a set of scale charges. Information on which to calculate aggregate values on a different basis is not available within the Inland Revenue, but it is clear that, in general, while the fuel scale charges broadly reflect the value of the fuel benefit, the scale charges for company cars still fall well short of the true value of the benefit.

The taxable value of private medical insurance premiums and most other expense payments and benefits — the main exceptions being beneficial loans and accommodation provided by an employer — is the cost to the employer of providing the benefit. The taxable value of beneficial loans is calculated by reference to the difference between the official rate of interest (which broadly reflects commercial rates) and the actual rate of interest paid; accommodation provided by an employer is taxed by reference to the annual value of the accommodation, less any rent paid. The Inland Revenue does not collect information on any other basis of valuation.

The most important types of benefits are cars and fuel for private use and private medical insurance.

Personal Allowances and Expenses

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to which taxpayers the explanatory note Cyllid Y Wlad Treth Incwm, ref 510 (1987), has been issued; how many have been issued; and at what cost.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 April, 1987, c. *162*]: Inland Revenue form 510 gives in Welsh a

brief summary of the main personal allowances and of expenses that may be claimed and explains that a tax return in Welsh is available on request. The form is sent with personal tax returns to taxpayers whose affairs are dealt with by tax offices in Wales and is also issued by those offices as required throughout the year.

An estimated 250,000 forms have been issued with tax returns this April. The cost for the year is £2,639.

DEFENCE

Conventional Forces

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the level of conventional forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I am not aware of any recent representations specifically about the level of conventional forces. A full description of the United Kingdom's conventional forces is set out in the annual Statement on the Defence Estimates.

Harpoon (Offset Work)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the offset work gained by United Kingdom firms in exchange for the purchase of Harpoon for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The offset work gained by United Kingdom firms in exchange for the purchase of Harpoon for the Royal Navy covers a wide variety of products and services including mechanical and electrical components, aircraft instruments, computer design and installations and research and development programmes.

Marconi and Plessey

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what defence contracts have been placed with Marconi and Plessey, respectively, in the past three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice of the Ministry to reveal details of contracts placed with individual contractors for reasons of commercial confidentiality. However, the overall values of contracts placed with the Marconi and Plessey groups of companies during the last three years are approximately £1·7 billion and £0·9 billion respectively.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many former employees of his Department have been given permission since 1979 to join the board of directors of *(a)* Marconi and *(b)* Plessey.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of Ministry of Defence personnel, and former staff, including serving and former members of the Armed Forces, granted approval to join the boards of companies in the Plessey and Marconi groups since 1979 are as follows:

	Plessey Group	*Marconi Group*
1979	—	1(1)
1980	—	—
1981	—	—
1982	—	—
1983	1	1(1)
1984	1	1(1)
1985	1(1)	2(2)
1986	—	1(1)
1987 to date	—	—

Figures in brackets indicate the number of cases in which a waiting period of between three months and two years was imposed.

Low-level Flights

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of low-flying missions flown in the United Kingdom for each year since 1979; how many flights traversed the Ministry of Defence area which contains the Borders region each year during that period; and how many formal complaints have been received from residents within the Borders region during the period.

Mr. Freeman: As far as low-flying missions flown in the United Kingdom since 1979 are concerned I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 22 April at column *585* to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas). The low-flying administrative area containing the Borders consists of Scotland south of a line between the firths of Forth and Clyde, and the figures in columns 2 and 3 relate to movements into and complaints from this area. The number of movements in a mission is variable but around 2·5 on average.

1 *Year*	*2* *Movements in southern Scotland*	*3* *Complaints from southern Scotland*	*4* *Complaints from Borders Region*
1979	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980	9,203	n/a	n/a
1981	12,526	265	n/a
1982	13,460	163	n/a
1983	16,624	163	n/a
1984	18,573	169	n/a
1985	20,204	157	n/a
1986	20,919	213	62
1987	[1]3,198	[2]51	21

[1] Up to 28 February.
[2] Up to 31 March.

Defence Service Organisation

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the budget for the Defence Export Services Organisation in *(a)* 1986-87 and *(b)* 1987-88.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is contained in table 4 "Exports of defence equipment: Votes 1 and 2" of the MOD Supply Estimates for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

US Installations

Mr. Ron Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many military installations the United States of America has in the United Kingdom, and how many personnel.

Mr. Stanley: There are 66 military bases and facilities in the United Kingdom made available for use by United States forces under United States national command. In addition, there are two North Atlantic Treaty Organisation armament depots under United Kingdom

command but providing a service for the United States forces. Approximately 31,500 United States Service personnel are currently stationed in the United Kingdom.

West Germany

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current balance of payments cost of keeping British forces in West Germany.

Mr. Stanley: The estimated direct cost to the balance of payments in 1987-88 of keeping British forces in West Germany is £1,350 million.

Hydrographical Surveys

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the employment of British vessels and crews in relation to hydrographical surveys which his Department undertakes in the North sea; and why Dutch and Danish survey ships have been chartered recently for such work.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A programme of hydrographic surveys to meet civil requirements is drawn up each year by my Department and the Department of Transport. The 1987 programme includes a hydrographic survey of part of the North sea. The task of carrying out the survey was put out to contract by my Department following competitive tender. It is the responsibility of the contractor to provide the vessels required, if necessary by chartering them. We cannot oblige the contractor to use British-flag vessels, although we naturally prefer that he should do so, and this is stated in the contract. In this case we understand that the contractor was unable to agree terms for the charter of British-flag vessels.

Magilligan Prison (Firing Range)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will take steps to ensure that the firing range situated close to Magilligan prison, Northern Ireland, is moved to a location out of earshot of the prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. It would not be feasible to move the facilities, which are sited at Magilligan training centre, to another location.

Accident (Dartmoor)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the injury to a 12-year-old boy by an explosive object found in the military training area in the Dartmoor national park on 22 April; and whether this date was a firing date.

Mr. Freeman: On 22 April a group of six juveniles aged between 6 and 18 supervised by a local resident were on Okehampton range when there was an explosion injuring one of the party. There was no firing on the range on that day. The range boundary is clearly marked and public access to the area is at all times in accordance with the MOD range byelaws. Signs are clearly displayed warning the public of the dangers of picking up or searching for items of ordnance.

I understand that the Devon and Cornwall constabulary investigations into the circumstances of the incident have concluded that on this occasion the public safety warnings were ignored and some members of the group were deliberately seeking out military souvenirs at the time of the explosion. This unfortunate accident, therefore, serves to underline the importance of observing the range byelaws, warning flags and notices which are intended to protect the public.

We do everything in our power to make the Dartmoor ranges safe, but it should be noted that they have been used for military training for some 90 years. Members of the public have access to the ranges when they are not in use, but for their own safety they are clearly warned not to pick up or even touch any metal objects.

The military investigations have not yet been completed and I cannot comment further at this stage.

United Kingdom-United States of America (Treaties)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the collaborative research, development and production of defence equipment and British participation in United States defence programmes.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list all treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the support provided by the United Kingdom Government either directly or indirectly for United States' military bases and installations and facilities in the United Kingdom and its territorial waters and for their expansion in a time of tension or war;

(2) if he will list all treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the use by the United States of military bases, both operational and support, and facilities within the territorial waters of the United Kingdom, the arrangements for the operational control of such bases and facilities, and their expansion in a time of tension and war;

(3) if he will list all treaties, agreements memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the use by the United States of America of bases and facilities in British territory outside the United Kingdom and support provided by the United Kingdom Government either directly or indirectly;

(4) if he will list all treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the exchange of information, materials and designs concerning the research, development and production of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the dates when the High Level Group, the Nuclear Planning Group, and the Defence Planning Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty

Organisation each agreed to support the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell by the United States in Germany; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has received from the United States authorities regarding their deployment of the W70-4 variant of the nuclear warhead for Lance in Germany;

(3) what information he has received from the United States authorities as to which variant of the W-79 nuclear shell has been deployed by the United States in Europe;

(4) what information he has received from the United States authorities regarding the deployment of W-79 nuclear shells with those United States custodial units which support the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement;

(5) when he was informed by the United States authorities of the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell in Germany; and when he was first informed of the United States intention to carry out the deployment.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has received from the United States authorities as to which variant of the W-79 nuclear shell has been deployed by them in Europe; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has received from the United States authorities regarding the deployment of the W-70-4 variant of the nuclear warhead for Lance in Germany;

(3) when he was informed by the United States authorities of the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell in Germany; and when he was first informed of the United States intention to carry out the deployment;

(4) what information he has as to when deployment of the W-79 by the United States in Europe commenced;

(5) if he will list the dates when the High Level Group, the Nuclear Planning Group and the Defence Planning Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation each agreed to support the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell by the United States in Germany;

(6) if he will list the grades and ranks of the civil servants and military officers who attend each of the following North Atlantic Treaty Organisation bodies: the High Level Group, the Special Consultative Group, the Nuclear Planning Group, the Study Group of the Nuclear Planning Group and the Defence Planning Committee;

(7) whether Her Majesty's Government's approval is required prior to the allocation of W-79 nuclear warheads by the United States to its custodial units supporting the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what information he has received from the United States authorities about the deployment of W-79 nuclear shells with those United States custodial units which support the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement;

(9) what information he has received from the United States authorities about the deployment by the United States army of W-79 nuclear warheads in the Northern Army Group area of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation;

(10) what information he has received from the United States authorities concerning a potential enhanced radiation capability in relation to the W-79 nuclear shell deployed by the United States in Europe.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 5 May 1987

ENERGY

Electricity

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the United Kingdom's demand for electricity in 2005, 2025 and 2050, respectively, and the proportion of that demand that would be provided by the proposed Severn barrage.

Mr. Goodlad: The production of forward estimates of electricity demand is the responsibility of the electricity supply industry. If a Severn tidal barrage of the kind currently under consideration were to be built near Cardiff and Weston, it might provide about 5 per cent. of the current electricity demand level on average over the year. To the extent that electricity demand grew in the future, this percentage would become smaller.

North-east

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will give figures showing the productivity of the north-east coalfield *(a)* over the last 12 months and *(b)* in 1982-83; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Average deep-mined revenue output per man shift in the North-East area during 1986-87 was 2·98 tonnes. This represents an impressive increase of 43 per cent. compared with the average of 2·09 tonnes during 1982-83.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make it his policy to invite an operating safety review team from the International Atomic Energy Agency to assist the nuclear installations inspectorate in its safety monitoring of *(a)* nuclear power plants, *(b)* nuclear fuel and enrichment plants and *(c)* nuclear reprocessing facilities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: I fully support the International Atomic Energy Agency's work on nuclear safety. The agency's provisional schedule of operational safety review team visits for 1987 does not include any to nuclear installations in the United Kingdom.

Regulatory control of our nuclear installations is of course the statutory responsibility of the nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list his responsibilities with regard to *(a)* safety of nuclear installations, *(b)* relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency, *(c)* relations with the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development nuclear energy agency, *(d)* relations with Euratom and *(e)* promoting visits by members of the public to civil nuclear installations as part of the nuclear industries' expanded open information policy.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am the Secretary of State with overall policy responsibility for the safety of nuclear installations. The Government insist on the highest standard of safety at United Kingdom nuclear installations, and encourage openness by the nuclear industry. We attach great importance to improving international co-operation on nuclear safety through the, IAEA, NEA and EURATOM. The promotion of visits to nuclear installations is a matter for the organisations involved.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 22 April, *Official Report*, column 547, if he will set out *(a)* the number and dates of all meetings to which he refers held so far, *(b)* the occasions when he has been present personally, *(c)* the number of departmental officials involved and *(d)* the organisations involved in the discussions; and if he will make a statement on progress to date.

Mr. Goodlad: It is not Government practice to reveal details of meetings held in confidence with other bodies. Discussions are continuing, and I shall make an announcement in due course.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 22 April, *Official Report*, column 547, on the Layfield report recommendations, if he will set out the nature of the considerations of security and commercial sensitivity on which discussions are taking place; and whether the safeguards divisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency and Euratom have been involved in the discussions.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 29 January at column 327. Safeguards issues will be taken into account as appropriate.

Coal Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now give an update to the latest date for which figures are currently available of the details of all serious accidents which have occurred in the coal industry for the year 1986-87 broken down according to coalfield areas.

Mr. David Hunt: Final year figures for serious accidents in 1986-87 are not yet available. I therefore have nothing further to add to the answer I gave the hon. Gentleman on 12 March, *Official Report*, columns 281-282.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now give an update to the latest date for which figures are currently available of the details of all fatal accidents which have occurred in the coal industry for the year 1986-87, broken down according to coalfield areas.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 1 May 1987, at column *249*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mozambique

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Mozambique; and what further action Her Majesty's Government intend to take to relieve the situation.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am deeply concerned at the scale of the present suffering in Mozambique. The Government are playing a full part in the international effort to alleviate it. In addition to our longer-term development assistance programme for Mozambique, we have offered over £11 million as emergency aid over the past few months. We stand ready to assist further. I will be discussing the situation with the President of Mozambique during his visit this week.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Research Councils

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes that the £15 million supplement to the research councils should be available in the years 1987-88 and subsequent years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The additional £15 million is for 1987-88. We are assessing the needs of science for future years in the current public expenditure survey. The Government are committed to maintaining and enhancing the strength and quality of the science base. We attach particular importance to sustaining the work of the most able scientists and their teams. I would remind the hon. Member that the Government has increased the science budget by 14 per cent. at constant prices since 1979.

Information Technology (Research)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether Her Majesty's Government intend, in the event of the proposals of the Bide (IT 86) Committee being accepted, to provide new money to keep basic research in information technology running at the present levels.

Mr. Walden: The Government are considering the recommendations of the committee, chaired by Sir Austin Bide, and the resource implications for basic research in information technology both within and outside the areas covered by the committee's report. The Government will make their decision known in due course.

Tertiary Colleges

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list, in tabular form, proposals put to him involving tertiary colleges since 1979, indicating in each case whether the proposals were approved, modified or rejected, the reasons for each rejection, the number of students at each tertiary college proposed and whether there was an existing sixth form college.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The table lists the statutory proposals published since August 1979 which involve the establishment of tertiary colleges, and shows whether these proposals were approved or rejected by my right hon. Friend or his predecessors. Information on the reasons for each rejection, on the number of students at each proposed tertiary college, and on whether there was an existing sixth form college, is not recorded centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Date published	*LEA*	*Proposal*	*Decision[1] and date*
Unknown but under 1944 Act	Cheshire	Crewe Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—17 November 1980
11 July 1980 (1944 Act)	Dudley	Halesowen Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—4 February 1981
21 November 1980	Durham	Peterlee Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—3 August 1981
10 August 1979	Dorset	Weymouth and Portland Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	Am—10 May 1982
5 June 1981	Croydon	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—19 February 1982
28 August 1981	Hampshire	Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—22 February 1982
11 September 1981	Dudley	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—21 April 1982
5 March 1982	Durham	Consett Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—15 February 1983
18 March 1982	Essex	Harlow Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—24 January 1983
26 March 1982	Durham	Bishop Auckland/Newton, Aycliffe Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—14 March 1983
26 March 1982	Wiltshire	Swindon Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—10 November 1982
30 April 1982	Humberside	Grimsby and Cleethorpes, Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—22 December 1982
10 June 1982	Lancashire	Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—17 January 1983
8 July 1982	Cumbria	West Cumbria Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—10 May 1983
28 July 1982	Wolverhampton	Bilston, Establish 1, Tertiary College	Am—7 April 1983
30 July 1982	Harrow	Establish 3, Tertiary Colleges	Am—20 September 1983
11 August 1982	North Yorkshire	Selby Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—6 April 1983
1 December 1982	Avon	Weston Super Mare, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—21 February 1984
3 December 1982	Hampshire	Brockenhurst, Establish 1, Tertiary College	ADI—15 February 1983

Date published	LEA	Proposal	Decision[1] and date
10 December 1982	Gloucestershire	Forest of Dean Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	Am—3 April 1984
28 January 1983	Lancashire	Rossendale Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—10 August 1983
16 February 1983	Lancashire	Blackburn Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—8 March 1984
4 March 1983	Hampshire	Fareham Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—24 October 1983
4 March 1983	Knowsley	Prescot, Establish 1, Tertiary College	Am—29 September 1983
22 April 1983	Calderdale	Halifax Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—14 November 1983
30 September 1983	Durham	Consett Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	Am—3 December 1984
3 November 1983	Lancashire	Skelmersdale, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—12 April 1984
13 July 1984	Staffordshire	Newcastle under Lyme Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—15 February 1985
20 September 1984	Kirklees	Dewsbury, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—28 October 1986
9 January 1985	Wolverhampton	Secondary Reorganisation, Establish 2, Tertiary Colleges	R—25 November 1985
22 April 1985	Bury	Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—15 April 1986
31 May 1985	Manchester	Establish 2, Tertiary Colleges	A—22 April 1986
6 September 1985	Oxon	Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—15 September 1986
30 September 1985	Sunderland	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 3, Tertiary Colleges	Am—3 November 1986
24 October 1985	Sheffield	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 8, Tertiary Colleges	Am—23 December 1986
14 October 1985	South Tyneside	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	A—9 October 1986
30 January 1986	Gateshead	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	Proposal subject of a Judicial Review
16 May 1986	Essex	West Essex Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	N/D
30 May 1986	Avon	South Bristol, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	R—27 January 1987
23 October 1986	Dudley	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	N/D
14 November 1986	Durham	Bishop Auckland Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 1, Tertiary College	N/D
23 January 1987	Derbyshire	Secondary, Reorganisation, Establish 2, Tertiary Colleges	N/D
5 March 1987	Northamptonshire	Establish 1, Tertiary College	N/D
27 March 1987	ILEA	Hackney: Establish 4, Tertiary Colleges	N/D

[1] —Key to the symbols
A —Approved
Am —Approved with modifications
ADI—Authority determined to implement
N/D—No decision made to date

North-East

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time students attend first degree courses at institutions of higher education in the north-east; and how many were doing so in 1978-79.

Mr. Walden: In 1985 there were 20,800 full-time and sandwich first degree students studying at universities, polytechnics and colleges situated in the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear and Cleveland. The corresponding figure in 1978 was 17,200.

Education Reforms

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the education reforms instituted since May 1979 together with any changes in the level of resources available to the education system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I will reply as soon as possible.

Pupils (Expenditure)

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the increase in spending per pupil has been since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Between 1979-80 and 1985-86, the net institutional recurrent expenditure per primary and secondary pupil has increased, in real terms, by 19 per cent.

Teachers (Drug-related Offences)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will issue a circular to local education authorities to the effect that they should refrain from employing as a teacher any person convicted of a drug-related offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend does not consider the issue of a circular on employment of teachers convicted of drug offences to be necessary. Local education authorities are aware of the need to protect children and young people from teachers who would be a risk to them, and my right hon. Friend whenever necessary uses his powers under the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 to bar such persons from teaching.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Standards)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will ask Her Majesty's inspectors to make a general report on education standards in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Mr. Dunn: It is for Her Majesty's inspectors to determine their programme of inspections of education in

individual local education authorities. I understand that they have no plans to inspect overall educational provision in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. They do, however, carry out each year a large number of formal and informal inspections of schools and colleges in the authority. In addition they have a range of meetings with officers of the authority to discuss matters of education in the area.

Human Embryos (Experiments)

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy that no Government funds or facilities will be used for the performing of experiments upon living human embryos before the introduction of the promised legislation on this matter.

Mr. Walden: No. The Government intend to await Parliament's decision on this issue. I would also refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 23 January at column 741 to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

O-Level and CSE Examinations

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the numbers of 1987 April school leavers who are to sit O-level and CSE examinations.

Mr. Dunn: Information for the academic year 1986-87 is not available. There were 15,300 pupils reported as leaving English schools in the spring term of 1985 who attempted GCE O-level or CSE examinations in the summer of that year.

Student Grants

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science further to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, columns 98-9, if he will make it his policy that no reductions in grant will be made to reflect the abolition of domestic rates payable by universities on residential accommodation for students.

Mr. Walden: The Government's plans for funding the universities are set out in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm 56). The UGC has no plans to change the system for reimbursing universities' rates payments in full.

Independent Schools

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to seek powers to extend his plans for a national curriculum to the independent schools sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Science and Technology (Departmental Achievements)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the achievements of his Department with respect to science and technology since 1979; and if he will make a statement on his plans for the future.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will give the average cost per pupil currently assisted under the assisted places scheme, for the most recent year for which figures are available;

(2) what information he has about the average cost per pupil in the independent schools sector, for the most recent year for which figures are available;

(3) if he will give the average cost per pupil by local authority in Greater Manchester and for England, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: (i) The average cost to my Department per assisted place pupil is £1,759 for the 1986-87 school year.

(ii) No information is available on the average cost per pupil in the independent school sector.

(iii) The net institutional expenditure per pupil in 15 maintained primary and secondary schools for Greater Manchester and for England was as follows in 1985-86, the latest year for which information is available. Net institutional expenditure does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection costs, capital expenditure or the financing costs of capital.

Local authority	*Primary schools £ (cash)*	*Secondary schools £ (cash)*
Bolton	720	1,115
Bury	715	1,175
Manchester	905	1,425
Oldham	815	1,095
Rochdale	795	1,275
Salford	790	1,200
Stockport	740	1,115
Tameside	815	1,160
Trafford	735	1,140
Wigan	785	1,230
England	805	1,175

Natural Environment Research Council

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the organisations that have received research funds from the Natural Environment Research Council, the projects that have been funded, and the amounts they have received since 1979.

Mr. Walden: The information on individual projects supported by the Natural Environment Research Council since 1979 can only be provided at disproportionate cost. The list of organisations and the research funds received by them are given in the council's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the research projects undertaken by the Freshwater Biological Association and funded by the Natural Environment Research Council that are to be discontinued.

Mr. Walden: No decision has yet been taken to discontinue any research project undertaken by the Freshwater Biological Association and funded by the Natural Environment Research Council.

Rural Schools

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy on the closure of schools in rural areas.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following wide consultation, I shall be issuing later this week a circular giving comprehensive advice on school provision and organisation. The circular will make it clear that I shall expect local authorities and voluntary bodies, in formulating their proposals, to take account of the general principles set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" about the size at which schools of different types can economically deliver a satisfactory curriculum; but that these principles are not to be interpreted as narrowly prescriptive or as providing a set of benchmarks for the closure of schools.

I recognise the wide degree of support that many rural schools command within their local communities. The circular will confirm that assessing the viability of an individual school is not solely a matter of the number of pupils on roll. I would expect proposals also to take account of wider considerations such as denominational choice; local geography; the distances to be travelled to alternative schools in the event of closure; and the age of the children making these journeys.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Burglary

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the increase in burglary in the Merseyside police authority area between *(a)* 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Mellor: Numbers of offences recorded in each police force area are published each year in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" and most recently in a Home Office statistical bulletin (table 6 of issue 4/87). The number of offences of burglary recorded by the Merseyside police decreased by an average of 2 per cent. per year between 1975 and 1979 and increased by an average of 9 per cent. per year between 1979 and 1986. Because the Merseyside police force was constituted on 1 April 1974, comparable figures based on the year 1974 are not available.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why, pursuant to the answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *347*, he is unwilling to change the electoral registration form to inform voters that their names and addresses may be sold without reference to them, or to give voters the option of not having their name and address sold to other organisations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is of overriding importance to ensure that the electoral register is as complete as possible. A warning notice might discourage people from registering. The electoral register is a public document, but it is open to those who do not wish their addresses to be used for mailing purposes to inform the mailing preference service of the fact.

Remand Hearings

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish details of the research on remand hearings to which the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), referred on 31 March, *Official Report*, column *916*, including information as to the nature and size of the sample and the number of occasions at each successive court appearance at which *(a)* successful and unsuccessful bail applications were made and *(b)* other progress with the case was made.

Mr. Mellor: The research mentioned was that undertaken by the court escort scrutiny which analysed a sample of 400 prisoners in custody during March 1985. The remaining information requested is not available.

Custodial Remands

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will give the grounds which led his Department to suggest in paragraph 8 of the consultation document, "Remands in Custody", that the courts escort scrutiny report's sample of 400 prisoners over-represented long-term prisoners, and that the report's estimate of the average length of remands in custody exceeded the Home Office's estimates; and whether he will recalculate the savings to be expected from the proposal advanced in the consultation document on the basis of an appropriate sample;

(2) whether, in relation to the courts escorts scrutiny report, he will provide details as to how the sample of 400 prisoners was selected, giving informations about the sampling method and the population from which the sample was drawn.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the sample of 400 prisoners in the court escort scrutiny report was chosen from the prison population in March 1985 rather than from receptions of prisoners on remand over a specific period. If no special allowance were made, the court escort scrutiny sample would therefore include a higher proportion of defendants remanded in custody for long periods. The more recent analysis referred to in paragraph 8 of the consultation document comes from the results of a sample of about 2,750 people whose cases were completed in magistrates' courts in three weeks between June 1985 and February 1986. The most recent analysis of data from this sample was published in Home Office statistical bulletin 5/1987, a copy of which is in the Library. No estimates have been made of savings which could occur on the basis of a different sample, since it was judged that any variations in the available estimates are small and do not affect the main conclusions of the survey that many remand appearances were unproductive of any useful results as regards the expedition of the case.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, in respect of the most convenient recent year or other appropriate period, the number of persons who, on their appearance in a magistrates' court, having been remanded in custody on the previous occasions, were disposed of respectively by *(a)* trial, *(b)* committal, *(c)* further remand in custody for one week or less, or *(d)* who exercised an option under section 59 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, providing the figures for each of the above four categories separately in respect of appearances in court on the second, third, fourth and subsequent occasion as applicable up to the twelfth.

Mr. Mellor: The information collected centrally relates to the final court appearance only and whether or not the person was remanded in custody by magistrates at any time before this appearance. Table 8·7 of the annual Command Paper "Criminal Statistics England and Wales"

gives information on the disposal, of those remanded in custody by magistrates courts. More detailed information is not available.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide the most recent information available about the extent to which defendants take up the option under section 59 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 not to appear at certain remand hearings; and whether he will provide figures showing the take up by length of remand period and by area.

Mr. Mellor: The results reported in Home Office research and planning unit paper 34 "Remands In The Absence Of The Accused", published in 1985, showed that between one third and one half of opportunities to be remanded in absence were taken up. Similar results are contained in the report of the court escort scrutiny. Information on take up by length of remand period and by area is not available.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the findings of the courts escorts scrutiny committee separately for summary and committal cases, showing the number of prisoners in their sample of 400 who were bailed at their second, third, fourth and subsequent appearances.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available and could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Cruelty to Animals

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received following the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals campaign to amend the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and the introduction of the Private Member's Bill by the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg).

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1 March, we have received 459 letters from right hon. and hon. Members about the campaign by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. From members of the public we have received 347 letters about the campaign and 17,650 postcards pre-printed by the RSPCA as part of its campaign material.

Bugging Devices

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to bring forward legislation to prevent the open unrestricted sale of bugging devices for commercial and domestic telephones, and the issuing of guidance and information about their installation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I do not believe that such legislation directed to the sale of such devices would be the best or most effective way to deal with the issues of privacy that arise.

Prisons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have access to integral sanitation; how many are obliged to slop out; what plans he has to improve toilet facilities in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places in prisons have been provided since June 1983 in *(a)* newly built prisons, *(b)* existing premises acquired for use as prisons and *(c)* additional places in existing prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The following additional new prison places have been provided since June 1983:

	Places
a) at newly built prisons	1,084
b) at existing premises acquired for use as prisons	750
c) additional places in existing establishments	1,826

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional places in prisons will be provided between now and 1995 in *(a)* newly built prisons, *(b)* existing premises acquired for use as prisons and *(c)* additional places in existing prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The following additional new prison places will be provided between now and 1995:

	Places
a) at newly built prisons	9,384
b) at existing premises acquired for use as prisons	250
c) additional places in existing establishments	4,061

Telephone Tapping

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought against private individuals and organisations for the illegal tapping of telephone calls since 1983; and how many of these prosecutions resulted in convictions.

Mr. Hurd: The information which is held centrally, which may be incomplete, indicates that there were no prosecutions or convictions since 1983 for the illegal tapping of telephones under either the Telecommunications Act 1984 or the Interception of Communications Act 1985. Information for 1986 or 1987 is not yet available.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints his Department has received from private individuals and organisations since 1983 concerning the suspected tapping of telephone calls.

Mr. Hurd: No record has been kept of the number of such complaints.

North-East

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are serving in the north-east constabularies; and how many were serving in 1978.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

Force	Authorised police establishment on 31 December 1978	Strength on 31 December 1978	Authorised police establishment on 31 March 1987	Strength on 31 March 1987
Durham	1,349	1,289	1,357	1,307
Northumbria	3,325	3,208	3,413	3,402
Cleveland	1,411	1,311	1,474	1,462
Totals	6,085	5,808	6,244	6,171

Police Station Closures

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police stations have been closed in Wales since 1979 both overall and by individual police authority area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constables concerned that the information requested is as follows:

Police force—police authority	Number of police stations closed since 1979
Dyfed Powys	17
Gwent	—
North Wales	2
South Wales	7
Total	26

Mohammad Jamil Khan

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mohammad Jamil Khan applied to the British embassy in Islamabad for a visa to visit the United Kingdom; for how long he wishes to visit; on what date the application was referred to the Home Office; and when he expects a decision on the application to be made by his Department.

Mr. Waddington: Mohammad Jamil Khan applied to the British embassy in Islamabad on 5 January for a visa for a six-month visit to relatives in the United Kingdom. Since the application did not appear to be straightforward, it was referred to the Home Office on 11 January for inquiries to be made in this country. This has taken longer than I would have wished, but the inquiries should be completed by the end of the month. Their result will be sent to the embassy, who will make a decision on Master Khan's application and inform his father of it direct. This delay is by no means typical of applications made in Islamabad, where over 90 per cent. of visit visa cases are dealt with on the same day.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *334*]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *343*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 22 April at column *627-8*.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *344*]: In April 1986, the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the Government's chief medical officer, circulated to all Departments guidance to managers and model notes for staff. This Department has issued guidance and information to staff whose duties may put them in contact with AIDS sufferers, or with samples containing the virus. Information has also been provided to personnel management and welfare staff. In addition, members of staff will have received copies of the DHSS leaflet distributed in January 1987 to all households in the United Kingdom. The need for further advice to staff is under review.

PRIME MINISTER

Police Investigations

Q38. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to seek to alter the arrangements under which the Attorney-General can direct the police to pursue investigations into specific matters at named locations; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I am advised that the Attorney-General has no power to direct the police to pursue any investigations.

"Better Made in Britain" Exhibition

Q57. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her visit to the "Better Made in Britain" exhibition on Wednesday 8 April.

The Prime Minister: I was delighted to be able to open the two "Better Made in Britain" exhibitions on 8 April.

"Better Made in Britain" plays an important role in bringing together purchasers and potential suppliers, challenging United Kingdom manufacturers to match foreign goods in design, quality, price and delivery. I hope that the very large number of United Kingdom suppliers who visited the two exhibitions will vigorously follow up the contracts which they made there, to win back more United Kingdom business, with all this means for profits, jobs and living standards in the United Kingdom.

Scott Lithgow (Orders)

Q109. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister when she now expects Her Majesty's Government to place the order promised to Scott Lithgow at the time an order was awarded to Vickers, Barrow in Furness for the construction of conventional submarines; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is the Government's wish to place these orders with Scott Lithgow, provided the company meets the terms outlined by my hon. Friend on 28 January 1986 at column *449*. Negotiations are still continuing with the company.

Farming

Mr. Pawsey asked the Prime Minister if she will publish a table showing the level of financial support for the farming industry alongside that for other major industries.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) on 2 March at columns *518-520*, which pointed out that in 1985, the latest year available, general Government expenditure in support of agriculture, forestry and fishing was £2,821 million compared with £2,432 million on manufacturing as a whole. A more detailed analysis could only be provided at disproportionate expense.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Prime Minister whether she will list Government achievements in the northern region since 1983; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I will reply to my hon. Friend shortly.

Mr. Fallon asked the Prime Minister whether she will list, by Government Department, the principal aid given to the northern region in each year since 1983.

The Prime Minister: I will reply to my hon. Friend shortly.

State Security

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what is her practice in relation to answering parliamentary questions about security matters which occurred under previous Administrations; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 10 February at column *161*, and to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 28 April at column *160*.

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Prime Minister by what authority her press secretary briefed the media about the scope and nature of the 1977 inquiries into the alleged activities of the security services in relation to the Government headed by Lord Wilson of Riveaulx; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) on 17 March at column 812, and to the reply I gave to the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Devonport (Dr. Owen) on 19 March at column 1038.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

Mr. Canavan asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the principal achievements of his Department in promoting British trade since 1983.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on Tuesday 16 December 1986 at column 438.

End-User Certificates

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he takes to monitor compliance with end-user certificates; how many contraventions have been notified to him over the latest period for which figures are available; what steps he takes to investigate alleged contraventions of the terms of such certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Naval Construction

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many contracts have been placed in British shipyards by foreign Governments for the construction of naval vessels so far in the current year; and if he will give details in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is not the Government's practice to reveal details of sales of defence equipment to foreign countries, for reasons of confidentiality. However, this year so far there have been no contracts for the construction of warships in British yards by foreign Governments.

Regional Aid

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many jobs have been created or safeguarded in the Northern region through regional development grants and regional selective assistance in each year since 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of jobs expected to be created or safeguarded in the northern region[1] through offers of new-style regional development grant and regional selective assistance in each financial year since 1983 are as follows:

Financial Year	Jobs
New-Style Regional Development Grants	
1983-84	[2]Nil
1984-85	846
1985-86	11,340
1986-87	18,389
Regional Selective Assistance	
1983-84	14,133
1984-85	13,579
1985-86	5,984
1986-87	9,600

[1] The Northern Region is the North East Region plus Cumbria.
[2] The new-style RDG came into force with effect from 29 November 1984.

Notes:

(1) Since old-style RDG's were not linked to the creation or preservation of jobs no estimate is available of the effect on employment of payments under that scheme.

(2) Some RSA and RDG offers will relate to the same jobs but it is not practicable accurately to identify these.

(3) The figures for both schemes are based on offers made.

New Companies

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many new companies have been registered in the northern region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Howard: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Wine Sales

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what meetings he has held with the local authorities co-ordinating body on trading standards during the last 12 months to discuss sales of wine by the glass; what conclusion he has reached on the basis of their representations about the effectiveness of the code of conduct relating to the sale of wine in prescribed measures and at agreed prices; if he will now introduce legislation to place the code on a statutory basis; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the options he has considered with the local authorities co-ordinating body on trading standards and with the trade sponsors of the code of conduct on the sales of wine by measured glass; and what steps he has in mind to establish stronger compliance with the code.

Mr. Howard: I have not discussed sales of wine by the glass with the local authorities co-ordinating body on trading standards in the last 12 months. The Department has, however, met the trade sponsors of the voluntary code of practice and impressed on them the need to secure more widespread compliance. The alternative would be legislation to require wine to be sold in a range of prescribed standard sizes or by reference to volume without the restriction of a prescribed range. The results of the most recent survey forwarded to the Department by a local authority indicate that adherence to the code is gaining momentum. Legislation would not therefore be appropriate at the present time.

South Africa

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many of the 7,300 black Africans reported in his Department's recent summary of company responses under the EEC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa as being paid below the SLL5 in the period ended 30 June 1985 were at the time employed by companies which by 30 June 1986 had stopped reporting to his Department or parts of companies which had or been sold by the company reporting;

(2) how many of the 7,300 black Africans reported in his Department's recent summary of company responses under the EEC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa as being paid below the SLL5 in the period ended 30 June 1985 were employed by companies which had reduced their black African workforces by June 1986 to fewer than the number of employees they reported below SLL5 the previous year; and what numerical effect such work force reductions have had on the total number of black Africans his Department considers to be being paid below SLL5.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is contained in the individual company reports submitted to my Department in accordance with the EC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa. The reports have, as usual, been deposited in the Library.

WALES

Road Works

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are his Department's scheduled starting dates, respectively, for improvements on the A487, for *(a)* the Felinheli bypass, *(b)* the Pont Selont improvements, *(c)* the Penygroes Uanllyfni bypass, *(d)* the Porthmadog bypass and *(e)* the Felinheli-Caernarfon south improvement; and what priority Gwynedd county council has indicated to his Department for all five of these schemes.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The A487 Port Dinorwic bypass (ie, Felinheli bypass), the A487 Seiont bridge and approaches scheme and the A487 Caernarfon-south of Port Dinorwic improvement are all expected to start in the period January 1988 to December 1990 in accordance with "Roads in Wales 1985". The start dates will depend on the completion of statutory procedures and scheme design and the availability of finance. Bypass schemes for Penygroes, Llanllyfni and Porthmadog are not included in the forward programme but the case for such improvements is being considered in drawing up the programme for the 1990s. In response to the consultation paper "Roads for Wales — The 1990s and Beyond", Gwynedd county council urged that projects programmed to start before 1990 should start as planned and indicated that bypasses for Porthmadgc, Penygroes and Llanllyfni were of equal priority for a start in the early 1990s.

Cardiac Services

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has sought to obtain cardiac services for National Health Service patients in Gwynedd or Clwyd by purchasing such services from private practitioners in England; and if he will make a statement on his policy on this matter.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My Department is presently exploring with the appropriate district health authorities a range of options to secure early improvement in cardiac

services to patients in north Wales, including the provision of the service by private sector hospitals. No decision has yet been made.

Footpaths

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply of 27 April, *Official Report*, column 50, whether objections have been received relating to footpaths ascending Pen yr Oleu Wen (655619), Carnedd Dafydd (663631), Carnedd Llewelyn (685645), Foel Grach (689659), Yr Elen (673652), Penyrhelgi-du (698631), Pen lithrig y wrach, Y Garn (632596), Tryfan (664594), Glyder Fawr (643579), Glyder Fach (657584), Elidir Fawr (613614), Mynydd Perfedd (624618), Foelgoch (628613), Moel Siabod (705546), Crib Goch (625553), Llwyedd (624533), Cnicht (645466), Moel Hebog (565469), Mynydd Mawr, (540547) or Moel Eilis (556576); and when he now expects the footpaths in question to appear on definitive maps of rights of way.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The timetable for the production of a definitive map for Gwynedd is a matter for Gwyedd county council.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Wales what new legislative provisions he anticipates will be required to supplement the existing town and country planning legislation in order fully to implement the European directive on environmental assessment.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A consultation paper on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the European directive on environmental assessment was issued jointly by the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Wales and Scotland in April 1986. This paper outlined the legislative proposals (including those in relation to projects in England and Wales which fall to be approved under the Town and Country Planning Acts) which it is proposed to bring into effect by statutory instrument under the European Communities Act 1972 beore 2 July 1988, the date by which the directive requires member states to take measures to comply with the directive. The responses to that consultation paper are still being considered.

A5 (Improvements)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been spent on major road improvements on the A5 trunk road in Wales during each of the last seven years; and what is the planned expenditure, at November 1986 prices, on this road for the next four years, including the present financial year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Outturn expenditure[1]

	£ million
1980-81	2·496
1981-82	1·323
1982-83	4·339
1983-84	2·729
1984-85	0·888
1985-86	0·327
1986-87	0·121

[1] These figures exclude expenditure on the A5/A55 Bangor By-pass as this was included in the information on A55 expenditure given to the hon. Gentleman on 27 April 1987, at column *49*.

Planned expenditure at November 1986 prices[1]

	£ million
1987-88	1·742
1988-89	[2]0·526
1989-90	[2]3·262
1990-91	[2]5·436
Later years	[2]16·28

[1] This includes expenditure on the A5/A483 Chirk By-pass.
[2] These figures exclude expenditure on land which is expected to amount to some £0·881 million in the years beyond 1987-88.

Expenditure in 1987-88 and later years on schemes not yet in progress will depend on the completion of design and statutory procedures and the availability of finance.

Studies are being carried out or are planned for A5 on Anglesey and for locations on the mainland. These may give rise to additional improvement schemes.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *349*]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April at column *628*.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *349*]: Staff in the Department have received copies of the leaflet on AIDS which was sent to every household in the country earlier in the year. In addition information which is more specific to employment issues—and based on guidance from the Management and Personnel Office and on the booklet "Aids and Employment" — has recently been issued to all staff.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

East Timor

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have received or made concerning military offensives by Indonesia in East Timor.

Mr. Renton: We have no evidence to support suggestions that Indonesia has launched military offensives in East Timor in recent months. Our impression is that the situation in East Timor is generally quiet, though minor incidents may still occur in those areas where low-level conflict persists.

Soviet Jews

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the estimated figures of Soviet Jews who have been allowed to emigrate from the Soviet Union during the month of April 1987.

Mr. Renton: 717. This is an increase over the figure for March (470). We welcome this continuing trend.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to the implications for the United Kingdom chemical industry under the requirements of article X of the United States draft treaty on chemical weapons.

Mr. Renton: Developments in the negotiations in Geneva are regularly discussed with the United Kingdom chemical industry.

In general, verification of non-production of chemical weapons in civil industry will be through agreed arrangements providing for information exchange and on-site inspection at a number of declared chemical facilities.

Article X of the United States draft treaty proposes arrangements for challenge inspection, the verification of last resort. By definition, a challenge inspection would be an exceptional event.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will review the United Kingdom's continued support for the modernisation of the United States' proportional share of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation chemical deterrent in the light of the position adopted by the United States at the conference on disarmament in the negotiations towards a chemical weapon treaty.

Mr. Renton: No. President Reagan reaffirmed with the Prime Minister at Camp David in November 1986 that a verifiable chemical weapons ban was one of their arms control priorities. We are working closely with the United States and other allies in Geneva to negotiate arrangements which will ensure that an agreement is fully effective.

Belize

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the talks on Belize between the United Kingdom, Belize and Guatemala, in Miami.

Mr. Eggar: Talks between Belize and Guatemala in Miami on 29 April were held in a frank and cordial atmosphere. British officials attended as observers. The delegations of Belize and Guatemala put forward proposals and agreed to report to their respective Governments.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that the garrison in Belize shall be maintained as long as considered necessary by the Government of Belize.

Mr. Eggar: As I told the hon. Member on 19 May 1986, it was agreed with the Belize Government at independence in 1981 that the British garrison will remain in Belize for an appropriate period.

Disarmament

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts to discuss current discussions on disarmament.

Mr. Renton: The next ministerial-level meeting of the North Atlantic Council will be in June. Until then, the process of close Alliance consultations on arms control will continue through both multilateral and bilateral contacts.

South Africa (Terrorism)

Mr. Cabom asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government made in the case of the trial of eight Namibians for their alleged contraventions of South Africa's Terrorism Act.

Mrs. Chalker: On 24 March, Her Majesty's ambassador in Cape Town made clear in a demarche to the South African Government our concern at evidence of human rights abuses by the security forces in Namibia.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Incomes

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what gains he estimates will accrue or have accrued to *(a)* the unemployed, *(b)* pensioners and *(c)* employed persons with incomes per year of (i) under £5,000, (ii) £10,000, (iii) £10,000 to £15,000, (iv) £15,000 to £20,000, (v) £20,000 to £30,000, (vi) £30,000 to £50,000, (vii) £50,000 to £70,000, (viii) £70,000 to £100,000 and (ix) over £100,000 (1) as a result of his Budget of 17 March and (2) cumulatively as a result of all Budgets since 1979; how many persons are in each group; and what has been the average gain for members of each group.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret the delay in replying to this question. The table gives estimates of reductions in income tax liabilities at 1987-88 income levels of the proposed allowances, thresholds and rates for 1987-88. Estimates are given for taxpayers aged over 65 and for employed persons (taken as those with earnings from employment as a main or subsidiary source of income): on this basis, some taxpayers may be in both categories and some of those shown as employed may have a spell of unemployment during the year. All information is in terms of single people and married couples. The proposed 1987-88 tax regime is compared with (1) the 1986-87 tax regime and (2) the 1978-79 tax regime, both indexed to 1987-88 levels by reference to the statutory provisions. Some of the income ranges have been combined in order to provide reliable estimates.

No comparable figures are available for the unemployed. Income tax changes can have no direct effect on

the net incomes of those who are not taxpayers, but income tax cuts in successive Budgets have helped improve incentives and stimulate enterprise and efficiency, thereby helping to create jobs.

Gains from the 1987 Budget

Range of Income £ per year	*Number of tax units in 1987-88[2] Million*	*Gain compared with Indexed[1] [3] 1986-87 tax regime*		*Indexed[2] [3] 1978-79 tax regime*	
		Amount £ million	*Average[4] per tax unit £ per year*	*Amount £ million*	*Average[4] per tax unit £ per year*
Employed Persons					
Under 5,000	2·2	50	20	240	110
5,000—10,000	5·9	460	80	1,560	270
10,000—15,000	4·7	640	140	2,210	470
15,000—20,000	2·5	500	210	1,680	680
20,000—30,000	1·4	450	310	1,630	1,150
30,000—50,000	0·5	180	360	1.090	2,240
Over 50,000	0·12	20	210	760	6,390
Total	17·3	2,310	130	9,620	450
Taxpayers Aged 65 and over					
Under 5,000	0·7	10	20	50	80
5,000—10,000	1·2	80	50	250	200
10,000—15,000	0·4	60	160	230	650
15,000—20,000	0·2	40	250	180	1,170
20,000—30,000	0·1	40	340	260	2,050
Over 30,000	0·07	20	240	520	7,550
Total	2·6	230	90	1,480	570

[1] Tax units where at least one member has earnings from employment as a main or subsidiary source of income.
[2] Married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.
[3] By reference to the statutory formula.
[4] By reference to the numbers paying tax in 1987-88.

Tax Reliefs and Allowances

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the aggregate value of the increase in tax reliefs and allowances of all kinds since May 1979 accruing to the richest 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent., and 20 per cent., of earners; what is the breakdown by kind of relief or allowance; how many persons are in each of these categories; and what has been the average gain per earner in each of these categories.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is available only for income tax personal allowances, thresholds and tax rates (including the investment income surcharge). Information in the table is given for the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. of taxpaying single people and married couples analysed by total income liable to tax. The table shows the reduction in income tax liabilities in a full year at 1987-88 income levels of the proposed 1987-88 income tax regime compared with the 1978-79 regime indexed to 1987-88 levels by reference to the statutory formula.

Reductions in income tax liabilities in 1987-88 compared with the indexed 1978-79 tax regime
Source of income tax reduction (+)/increase (−)

	Point of the income distribution[1] in 1987-88			
	Top 1 per cent.	*Top 5 per cent.*	*Top 10 per cent.*	*Top 20 per cent.*
Number of tax units[2] in 1987-88—million	0·2	1·1	2·1	4·2
Increases in personal allowances				
Amount—£ million	90	380	690	1,210
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	450	360	330	290
Abolition of reduced rate band of 25p				
Amount—£ per million	−40	−200	−400	−800
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	−170	−190	−190	−190
Decrease in basic rate of 6p				
Amount—£ million	260	1,220	2,200	3,620
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	1,230	1,150	1,040	850
Increase in basic rate limit of £1,200				
Amount—£ million	130	340	410	420

	Point of the income distribution[1] in 1987-88			
	Top 1 per cent.	Top 5 per cent.	Top 10 per cent.	Top 20 per cent.
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	600	320	190	100
Changes in higher rate thresholds up to 60 per cent.				
Amount—£ million	590	800	800	800
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	2,780	750	380	190
Abolition of higher rates above 60 per cent.				
Amount—£ million	590	590	590	590
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	2,780	550	280	140
Abolition of investment surcharge				
Amount—£ million	290	510	610	700
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	1,390	480	290	160
Total reduction				
Amount—£ million	1,920	3,640	4,900	6,530
Average[3] per tax unit—£ per year	9,040	3,430	2,310	1,540

Note:—In the table, the effect of each change has been calculated on the assumption that each of the previous changes has already been made.

[1] Based on 21·2 million single people and married couples expected to pay tax in 1987-88 and excluding a further 950,000 who would pay tax under the revalorised 1978-79 regime.

[2] All information is in terms of tax units i.e. married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

[3] By reference to the numbers paying tax in 1987-88.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will estimate the number of individual share owners in the northern region at present and in 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The joint Treasury and stock exchange survey estimated that 16 per cent. of the adult population in the northern region owned shares at the beginning of 1987. I regret that comparable figures are not available for 1979, though the number of adults owning shares has trebled over the United Kingdom as a whole since 1979.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the information on mortgages and the price of dwellings referred to in the reply of 26 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *873*; and if he will add a forecast for 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress has been made in the discussions between the European Investment Bank and Eurotunnel on the provision of the £1,000 million loan for the Channel tunnel project; if a decision has yet been made on the guaranteeing of the loan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: A possible loan will be discussed at the next meeting of the board of directors. The question of guarantees will be one of the matters for consideration but it is accepted that there can be no question of a guarantee by the United Kingdom Government.

Building Societies

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will introduce legislation to prevent the building societies from relying on a disclaimer in mortgage applications to avoid liability to purchasers of property for negligence on the part of the societies' own surveyor.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*]: No. Section 2(2) of the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 already provides that a person cannot by reference to any contract term or notice exclude or restrict his liability for negligence except in so far as the term or notice satisfies the requirement of reasonableness.

Income Tax

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost in 1986-87 prices of all reductions in rates of income tax since May 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April, 1987, c. *64*]: The total cost, in a full year, of all changes since 1978-79 in income tax rates, including those proposed in the 1987 Budget, is £7,840 million at 1987-88 levels of income (equivalent to £7,540 million at 1986-87 prices). This amount includes the cost of changes in basic and higher rates and higher rate thresholds, and abolition of the investment income surcharge and the reduced rate band. It excludes the cost of changes in the levels of personal allowances which totals £4,030 million at 1987-88 levels of income (£3,875 million at 1986-87 prices). The calculation is made by comparing the total income tax liabilities in 1987-88 under the proposed 1987-88 income tax regime with those under the 1978-79 tax regime indexed to 1987-88 levels by reference to the statutory formula. Thus, the comparisons allow for budgetary changes in income tax rates and thresholds but not for any change in the definition of the tax base between 1978-79 and 1987-88. The forecast movement in the RPI has been used to calculate equivalent amounts at 1986-87 prices.

Aviation Fuel (Iran)

Mr. Allan Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will investigate the circumstances in which

the oil tankers Paula Maersk and Ambio Fingo left Milford Haven laden with aviation fuel and ended up at Iran's Hormuz terminal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1987, c. *232*]: Since aviation fuel destined for Iran is not subject to export licensing requirements, there would appear to be no reason for investigating the circumstances in this case.

Channel Tunnel (Duty-free facilities)

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that duty-free facilities are made available to rail passengers utilising the Channel tunnel, commensurate with those available to cross-Channel passengers using alternative modes of transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1987, c. *290*]: It is the Government's intention, so far as international obligations allow, to provide that travellers through the Channel tunnel will enjoy such duty-free facilities as are available to persons travelling by sea or air.

It is not currently the practice within the Community to permit the sale of duty-free goods on board trains. Most member states have acceded to an agreed international standard which does not provide for such a facility. Duty-free sales could be allowed only with the agreement of the other member states concerned. This particular matter is being kept under review during discussions about the customs arrangements for the tunnel.

It is expected that there will be duty-free shop facilities at the French and British terminals for the shuttle trains, *ie* at Frethun and Cheriton.

THE ARTS

Acceptances in Lieu

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Minister for the Arts what use has been made by the Office of Arts and Libraries of the contingency resources for acceptance in lieu of tax in the current financial year.

Mr. Luce: As I announced on 19 March 1987 in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), at col. *561*, the Government are acquiring Constable's "Stratford Mill" for the nation. The necessary resources will be made available from the 1987-88 public expenditure reserve. There will be no overall increase in public expenditure.

Opera North

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has about the future funding of Opera North, Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Opera North will receive Arts Council funding of £2·593 million for 1987-88 which includes £0·454 million for touring. In addition, the company has received about £0·032 million from the local authorities for its operations during the first three months of this financial year, and discussions are continuing about funding for the remainder of the year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Criminal Justice Bill

Mr. Alton asked the Lord Privy Seal how many hours have been spent in Standing Committee and on the Floor of the House of Commons discussing the Criminal Justice Bill; and what was the cost to public funds.

Mr. Biffen: The information is as follows:

Hours spent discussing the Criminal Justice Bill

	Hours
In Standing Committee	82·5
On the floor of the House of Commons	21·0

No sensible estimate of the cost to the taxpayers is readily available.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report*, the maximum number of approved places and permited average occupancy rates for all community programme projects which have been approved by managing agencies in the Borders region for each year since 1983, including those proposed in 1987-88.

Mr. Lee: The Borders regional council community programme agency is the only managing agent in the Borders region. Statistics on this agency are available from 1985, although not in the precise form requested. Prior to 1985, this information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Borders Regional Council community programme agency.

	Authorised places	*Average filled places*
1985-86	330	267
1986-7	329	282
1987-8	307	261

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General how many people have been placed in work by job centres in the northern region in each year since 1983.

Mr. Trippier: Following is the available information. The figures exclude placings on Government schemes.

	Number
1983	83,311
1984	92,094
1985	99,408
1986	101,957

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General (1) how many new jobs have been created in the northern region in each year since 1983;

(2) how many people are self-employed in the northern region; and how many were so in 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job losses and job gains.

The available information is as follows:

Northern Region
Changes in the size of the Civilian Employed Labour Force[1] since the previous December

December of each year

	Changes
1983	−10,000
1984	+19,000
1985	+19,000
1986	+10,000

[1] The Civilian Employed Labour Force is the sum of Employees in Employment and the Self Employed.

Numbers of self-employed people (based on labour force surveys)

	Number
1978	79,000
1983	92,000
1986	107,000

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General (1) how much will be spent on training and retraining in the northern region in the current year; and how much was spent in 1983;

(2) how many places are being provided in each of his Department's training schemes in the current year in the northern region; and how many were so provided in 1983.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Inner-city Task Forces

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs were created during the first year's operation of the eight inner-city task forces.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A principal aim of the task forces is to make it easier for residents in their areas to get jobs. However, it is not possible to measure total net additional jobs in the task force areas with accuracy. Any estimate would have to combine new jobs specifically associated with task force projects, jobs associated with business start-ups; jobs in firms helped by task force development funds, jobs created in agencies funded by the inner cities initiative and jobs gained by residents as a result of training courses facilitated by the initiative. We have not therefore yet attempted such an overall estimate.

I have been very impressed with the progress made by our eight Government task forces. They have made considerable headway in countering problems of employability, motivation, skills and enterprise among residents of some of our most difficult areas. The considerable success of the task forces has, as I announced to the House on Monday 27 April, led us to extend the experiment to a further eight areas. We are confident that the new task forces will enjoy the same degree of success, and bring positive benefits to the residents of their areas.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General in relation to the Control of Industrial Major Accidents and Hazards Regulations 1984, for how many large inventory top tier sites the area defined by the notification of institutions handling hazardous substances consultation distance, determined by the Health and Safety Executive for the site, exceed the area to which in the opinion of the enforcing authority the provisions of Control of Industrial Major Accidents and Hazards Regulation 12 should apply.

Mr. Lee: This information is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General in relation to the Control of Industrial Major Accidents and Hazards Regulations 1984, *(a)* for how many large inventory top tier sites, and for what proportion of the total number of large inventory top tier sites, Control of Industrial Major Accidents and Hazards Regulations 11 and 12 have been complied with and *(b)* for how many small inventory top tier sites, and for what proportion of the total number of small inventory top tier sites, Control of Industrial Major Accidents and Hazards Regulations 11 and 12 have been complied with.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested. Of the installations at which the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 apply, 173 are known to have prepared plans required by regulation 11. The number of installations at which actions is known to have been taken in respect of regulation 12 is 190.

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General on what date amendments to the Control of Industrial Major Accidents and Hazards Regulations 1984 arising from European Community Directive 82/502/EEC will come into force.

Mr. Lee: Directive 87/216/EEC, which amends Directive 82/501/EEC, was adopted on 19 March 1987 and notified to Her Majesty's Government on 24 March 1987. Member states must comply with the amendment not later than 18 months after notification and it is intended that the required amendments to the Control of Industrial Major Accidents Hazards Regulations 1984 will be made within this time period.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if, on the basis of the labour force survey, he will list how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women, *(c)* men and women (i) said they would like a job and were available to start work in the next two weeks, (ii) said they would like a job but were not available to start work in the next two weeks but had sought work in the last four weeks and (iii) said they would like a job; and if he will provide estimates for Scotland, Wales and each region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list the numbers employed in each parliamentary constituency in 1984, on the basis of his results from the labour force survey, showing for each constituency the gains and losses in employees since 1981;

(2) if he will publish the April unemployment rates for the United Kingdom and each region, including Scotland and Wales, using the new employment estimate contained in the 1984 census of employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the numbers employed in *(a)* manufacturing

industry and *(b)* manufacturing and construction industry in each parliamentary constituency in 1984, on the basis of his results from the labour force survey, showing for each constituency, the gains and losses in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* manufacturing and construction employees since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is not available. The labour force survey only provides estimates at national and regional level and is not designed to provide information for smaller areas such as parliamentary constituencies. The available constituency figures are the same as given in my reply to the hon. Member on 10 April 1987, at columns 435-443.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of people who have been continuously unemployed since June 1983 for each region of the country and for Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend on 10 April 1987 at column 434.

Wages Councils

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the statistics on wages councils employment and compliance with wages councils rates in 1986 in the same format used in the reply given on 17 April 1986, *Official Report*, columns 493-98; if he will also indicate the effect on employment in each wages council sector of the removal of young people from wages council coverage; and if he will show for each wages council the extent of underpayment of young people aged under 21 years before their removal from wages council coverage.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is given in the tables, except that statistics relating to underpayments of young people under the age of 21 are not available.

Attempts to estimate the employment effects of the reforms implemented by the Wages Act 1986 are not likely to be fruitful, but the removal of statutory minima, which prevent employers from offering jobs at rates which young people would accept, must result in increased employment.

Table 1
Establishments Covered by wages councils on register—January 1986

Wages Councils	*London*	*South Eastern*	*Eastern*	*South Western*	*Midlands*	*North Western*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*Northern*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Total*
Aerated Waters	10	10	171	10	59	100	25	19	64	11	479
Clothing Manufacture	1,736	133	504	212	1,360	1,000	462	210	387	179	6,183
Boot & Shoe Repairing	871	192	218	157	238	359	236	77	241	52	2,641
Button Manufacturing	18	3	5	2	15	6	5	1	—	3	58
Coffin Furniture & Cerement Making	1	—	—	2	6	4	5	—	9	—	27
Cotton Waste Reclamation	4	—	—	1	—	32	4	—	—	1	42
Flax and Hemp	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	19	—	21
Fur	166	8	29	6	13	52	14	1	41	5	335
General Waste Materials Reclamation	121	58	157	102	303	324	261	86	127	86	1,525
Hairdressing Undertakings	2,172	2,317	4,802	2,601	5,399	5,671	3,285	1,939	2,900	1,644	32,731
Hat, Cap & Millinery	22	3	48	4	11	21	12	7	2	3	133
Lace Finishing	1	—	—	—	63	—	—	—	3	1	68
Laundry	159	93	129	80	127	62	42	48	124	54	918
Linen & Cotton Handkerchief	11	—	2	3	19	124	5	1	8	4	177
Made-up Textiles	40	12	53	21	47	46	35	23	39	16	332
Ostrich & Fancy Feather	5	1	11	3	1	—	—	4	—	—	25
Perambulator & Invalid Carriage	2	1	6	1	9	5	5	1	2	1	33
Retail Bespoke Tailoring	212	36	83	36	42	50	56	16	37	7	575
Rope, Twine & Net	1	1	6	12	16	22	15	4	27	1	105
Sack & Bag	12	—	9	2	15	32	13	4	5	6	98
Toy Manufacturing	13	20	57	22	35	52	39	11	7	14	270
Retail Trades (Non-Food)	15,154	8,837	13,948	7,184	20,026	12,101	8,881	4,290	9,419	3,876	103,716
Retail Food & Allied Trades	9,709	10,804	16,758	9,083	13,908	15,193	10,354	7,749	12,248	5,218	111,024
Licensed Non-Residential	4,024	4,408	8,427	5,200	12,097	9,725	7,083	4,021	5,371	4,053	64,409
Licensed Residential Establishment and Licensed Restaurant	6,607	2,889	3,805	5,267	2,739	2,377	1,835	1,467	3,816	2,026	32,828
Unlicensed Place of Refreshment	3,938	1,568	2,211	1,542	1,691	1,568	1,220	897	1,551	868	17,054
Total	45,009	31,394	51,439	31,554	58,239	48,926	33,894	20,876	36,447	18,129	375,907

Table 2
Checks of pay carried out at establishments and underpayments found—analysis by wages council 1986

	All checks pay (visited and not visited)				*Inspections by visit*			
	Establishments checked	*Percentage of register checked*	*Number of establishments underpaying*	*Percentage of establishments underpaying*	*Establishments visited*	*Percentage of register visited*	*Number of establishments visited underpaying*	*Percentage of establishments visited underpaying*
Aerated Waters	65	13·6	1	1·5	32	6·7	1	3·1
Clothing Manufacturing	882	14·3	315	35·7	853	13·8	315	36·9
Boot and Shoe Repairing	216	8·2	23	10·6	188	7·1	23	12·2
Button Manufacturing	11	19·0	—	10·6	11	19·0	—	—

	All checks pay (visited and not visited)				*Inspections by visit*			
	Establishments checked	*Percentage of register checked*	*Number of establishments underpaying*	*Percentage of establishments underpaying*	*Establishments visited*	*Percentage of register visited*	*Number of establishments visited underpaying*	*Percentage of establishments visited underpaying*
Cotton Furniture and Cerement Making	3	11·1	—	—	3	11·1	1	33·3
Cotton Waste Reclamation	5	11·9	—	—	5	11·9	—	—
Flax and Hemp	3	14·3	—	—	3	14·3	—	—
Fur	32	9·6	3	9·3	32	9·6	3	9·4
General Waste Materials Reclamation	161	10·2	7	4·2	161	9·9	7	4·3
Hairdressing and Undertakings	3,840	11·1	846	23·2	2,379	7·3	846	35·6
Hat, Cap and Millinery	14	10·5	—	—	14	10·5	—	—
Lace Finishing	2	2·9	1	50·0	2	2·9	1	50·0
Laundry	106	11·5	25	23·5	90	9·8	25	27·8
Linen and Cotton Handkerchief	14	7·9	4	28·5	14	7·9	4	28·6
Made-up Textiles	41	12·3	2	4·8	41	12·3	2	4·9
Ostrich and Fancy Feather	6	24·0	1	16·6	6	24·0	1	16·7
Perambulator and Invalid Carriage	3	9·1	—	—	3	9·1	—	—
Retail Bespoke Tailoring	63	11·9	9	14·2	60	10·4	9	15
Rope, Twine and Net	7	6·7	—	—	7	6·7	—	—
Sack and Bag	8	8·2	2	25·0	8	8·2	2	25·0
Toy Manufacturing	26	9·6	6	23·0	24	8·9	6	25·0
Retail Trades (Non Food)	8,811	7·7	1,713	21·3	4,034	4·5	1,713	37·0
Retail Food and Allied Trades	10,878	9·8	2,288	20·3	5,539	5·0	2,288	39·9
Licensed Non-Residential	6,100	9·5	1,246	20·4	5,266	8·2	1,246	23·7
Licensed Residential Establishment and Licensed Restaurant	3,662	11·2	1,242	33·9	3,350	10·2	1,242	37·1
Unlicensed Place of Refreshment	1,816	10·6	550	30·2	1,601	9·4	550	34·4
Total	35,777	9·5	8,286	22·9	18,388	6·5	8,286	33·7

Table 3

Wages covered by wages councils and results of pay checks in 1986

1	*Estimated number of workers covered by Wages Council Orders at June 1982* [1] *2*	*Workers whose pay was checked by visit and other methods* *3*	*Workers whose pay was checked by visit* *4*	*Workers under-paid* *5*	*Percentage underpaid of all workers checked* *6*	*Percentage underpaid of all workers checked by visit* *7*	*Arrears paid £* *8*	*Arrears waived by workers £* *9*	*Arrears not pursued £* *10*	*Arrears assessed £* *11*
Aerated Waters	15,000	3,212	688	1	0·03	0·1	46	—	—	46
Clothing Manufacture	252,800	17,388	15,704	942	5·42	6·0	57,453	2,947	35,478	95,878
Boot and Shoe Manufacturing	7,100	518	447	27	5·21	6·0	4,151	474	461	5,086
Button Manufacturing	2,100	164	164	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making	300	31	31	1	3·23	3·2	20	—	—	20
Cotton Waste Reclamation	500	39	39	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Flax and Hemp	1,400	34	34	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fur	4,500	153	153	3	1·96	2·0	522	—	—	522
General Waste Materials Reclamation	19,300	1,501	1,475	15	1·00	1·0	1,147	226	212	1,585
Hairdressing Undertakings	135,600	11,549	7,446	1,114	9·65	15·0	124,820	27,240	18,127	170,187
Hat, Cap and Millinery	6,800	607	607	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lace Finishing	800	23	23	1	4·35	4·3	43	—	—	43
Laundry	33,700	2,477	1,965	66	2,66	3·4	5,683	1,125	4,481	11,289
Linen and Cotton Handkerchief	5,200	191	191	10	5·24	5·2	615	—	—	615
Made-up Textile	4,800	467	467	2	0·43	0·4	157	—	—	157
Ostrich and Fancy Feather	1,400	192	192	1	0·52	0·5	48	—	—	48
Perambulator and Invalid Carriage	1,500	127	127	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Retail Bespoke Tailoring	5,200	190	177	10	5·26	5·6	2,350	—	136	2,486
Rope, Twine and Net	4,000	189	189	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sack and Bag	1,400	52	52	4	7·69	7·7	263	—	—	263
Toy Manufacturing	18,900	544	515	23	4·23	4·5	816	—	301	1,117
Retail Non-Food Trades	512,800	58,378	18,974	2,782	4·77	14·7	361,300	99,656	83,966	544,922
Retail Food and Allied Trades	519,300	58,281	20,531	4,285	7·35	20·9	423,802	150,919	99,692	674,413
Licensed non-Residential	508,700	48,698	31,134	2,656	5·45	8·5	269,980	52,910	46,405	369,295
Licensed Residential and Restaurant	533,300	49,457	30,751	2,370	4·79	7·7	226,995	33,342	39,931	300,268
Unlicensed Place of Refreshment	114,400	17,049	7,284	1,220	7·16	16·7	108,224	38,862	19,816	166,902
Total	2,734,800	271,511	139,360	15,533	5·72	11·1	1,588,435	407,701	349,006	2,345,142

[1] The estimates in column 2 include workers under the age of 21 who are no longer covered by wages councils. Work is in hand to prepare revised estimates.

Table 4
Checks of pay carried out at establishments and underpayments found—Analysis by division—1986

Division	All checks of pay (visited and not visited)				Inspections by visit			
	Establishments checked 1	Percentage of register checked 2	Number of establishments underpaying 3	Percentage of establishments underpaying 4	Establishments visited 5	Percentage of register visited 6	Number of establishments visited underpaying 7	Percentage of establishments visited underpaying 8
London	2,852	6·3	608	21·3	2,214	4·9	608	27·5
South Eastern	4,474	14·3	646	14·4	2,749	8·8	646	23·5
Eastern	5,341	10·4	974	18·2	3,588	7·0	974	27·1
South Western	2,319	7·3	832	35·9	1,802	5·7	832	46·2
Midlands	4,755	8·2	943	19·8	2,694	4·6	943	35·0
North Western	4,960	10·1	1,397	28·2	3,569	7·3	1,397	39·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,486	10·3	805	23·1	2,218	6·5	805	36·3
Northern	2,284	10·9	844	37·0	1,741	8·3	844	48·5
Scotland	3,754	10·3	656	17·5	2,433	6·7	656	27·0
Wales	1,552	8·6	500	32·2	1,318	7·3	500	37·9
Great Britain	35,777	9·5	8,205	22·9	24,326	6·5	8,205	33·7

Note:
The Divisional figures for the number of establishments where pay was checked by methods not involving inspection visits include multiple firms whose head office is located in the Division whose branches are in other areas. This needs to be taken into account when comparing the Divisional figures shown in columns 1-4 of Table 4.

Table 5
Workers whose pay was checked in each wages inspectorate division—1986

Division	Workers whose pay was checked by visit and other methods	Workers whose pay was checked by visit	Workers underpaid	Percentage underpaid of all workers checked	Percentage underpaid of all workers checked by visit	Arrears paid	Arrears waived workers	Arrears not pursued	Total arrears assessed
1	2	3	4	5	6	£ 7	£ 8	£ 9	£ 10
London	23,743	12,851	947	4·0	7·4	143,814	40,070	28,956	212,840
South East	30,678	16,802	1,062	3·5	6·3	105,813	21,841	9,374	137,028
Eastern	42,688	20,832	1,783	4·2	8·6	179,843	44,046	26,883	250,772
South West	13,543	9,976	1,614	11·9	16·2	144,744	17,933	42,966	205,643
Midlands	49,370	16,435	1,833	3·7	11·2	191,095	52,870	58,982	302,947
North West	41,664	19,905	2,701	6·5	13·6	292,071	94,804	58,510	445,385
Yorkshire and Humberside	22,506	13,571	1,576	7·0	11·6	148,637	46,497	22,998	218,132
Northern	10,643	8,268	1,751	16·5	21·2	147,812	10,337	16,214	174,363
Scotland	28,864	13,745	1,200	4·2	8·7	116,224	39,508	32,182	187,914
Wales	7,812	6,975	1,066	13·6	15·3	118,382	39,795	51,941	210,118
Total	271,511	139,360	15,533	5·7	11·1	1,588,435	407,701	349,006	2,345,142

The Divisional figures for the number of workers whose pay was checked by methods not involving inspection visits include workers employed by multiple firms whose head office is located in the Division, who are employed in branches in other areas. This needs to be taken into account when comparing the Divisional figures shown in columns 2 and 5 of Table 5.

Brentwood and Ongar (Training Schemes)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Paymaster General if he will state the number of young people on various training schemes in the Brentwood and Ongar constituency, based on the most recent statistics available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows. On 30 April 1987, in the Brentwood and Ongar local authority district, which includes the constituency of Brentwood and Ongar, there were 110 people in training on YTS schemes. In addition, a further 184 young people who live in Brentwood were in training in other YTS schemes in Essex.

I am greatly encouraged by the success of YTS. It reflects well on all those involved in the programme, particularly industry and commerce, that YTS is now a high-quality training programme which offers our young people the best possible start in working life.

DHSS Benefits

Mr. Dewar asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table giving the number of people in each Department of Health and Social Security office area in Scotland who have been refused entitlement to benefit *(a)* for failing the eligibility for work criteria and *(b)* following a Restart interview in the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

"Can Workfare Work?"

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will detail all the costs involved in the study by Mr. John Burton on "Can Workfare Work?"

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The research project into workfare carried out by the employment research centre of the university of Buckingham cost £19,926.

Professor Addison (Study)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will detail all the costs incurred in the study by Professor Addison of the University of North Carolina; and when the report will be made available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The study by Professor Addison was part of the research project into workfare carried out by the university of Buckingham. The total cost of the project was £19,926. It is not possible to provide specific cost figures for particular aspects of the project.

I understand that the employment research centre at the university intends to publish Professor Addison's report soon.

"Action for Jobs"

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General what is his policy towards the distribution of the Manpower Services Commission pack, "Action for Jobs" by persons outside his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The "Action for Jobs" booklet is a guide to over one million opportunities available through over 30 employment, enterprise and training programmes. The opportunities are freely available to a wide range of people and we have therefore encouraged as large a distribution of the booklet as possible. This includes distribution through banks, post offices and other organisations so as to reach as many people as can benefit from it. Over 5 million copies have been taken up so far.

ENVIRONMENT

PRC (Homes) Ltd.

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many individual guarantees have been issued by PRC (Homes) Ltd. to date in respect of completed repair works.

Mr. Tracey: I understand from PRC Homes Ltd. that, as at 1 April 1987, 1,423 houses had been registered in England and Wales under the PRC Homes Ltd. warranty scheme; and that, of these, 396 had had their repairs completed.

Equipment Sales

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the way in which the Property Services Agency and contractors conducted the sale of equipment used for building the airport at Mount Pleasant in the Falklands.

Mr. Chope: Most of the equipment used in the building of the Mount Pleasant airport was bought, and consequently owned, by the contractor, Laing-Mowlem-ARC Joint Venture. Disposal of that equipment is entirely a matter for the joint venture.

In respect of surplus stores and equipment sold by PSA, I refer to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 24 November at column 43. That sale realised net receipts to the Exchequer of just over £500,000.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* annual statistics since 1979 of local government spending in Grimsby, and the percentage of this spending which was financed by the central Government rate support grant.

Mr. Chope: The information for 1981-82 and later years is as follows:

	Total expenditure £ million	*Rate support grant as per cent. of total expenditure*
1981-82	4·323	91·4
1982-83	4·934	79·9
1983-84	5·210	79·6
1984-85	5·773	72·9
1985-86	5·981	79·4
1986-87	6·328	81·6
1987-88	7·336	70·1

Total expenditure is the measure of local authority expenditure used in the determination of block grant (the main component of rate support grant). It comprises net current expenditure on the rate fund revenue account plus items such as debt charges and revenue contributions to capital and less specific and supple-mentary grants and items such as interest receipts. Estimates of total expenditure prior to 1981-82 are not available.

British Gas (Land Holdings)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to remove the land holdings of British Gas from the public bodies land Register under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1980, following privatisation of the Corporation.

Mr. John Patten: The Gas Act 1986, which privatised the British Gas Corporation, also amended the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 so that the provisions concerning the registers of publicly owned land, contained in part X and schedule 16 of the Act, no longer applied to British Gas. The relevant provisions of the Gas Act were brought into operation on 23 August 1986.

Council House Sales

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council-owned houses in the borough of Shrewsbury and Atcham have been sold since the implementation of the Housing Act 1980.

Mr. Tracey: Reported sales of dwellings by Shrewsbury and Atcham council appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are available in the Library:

Financial years	*Issue No.*
1980-81	62
1981-82	63
1982-83	67
1983-84	75
1984-85 and 1985-86	79

In the first nine months of 1986-87, Shrewsbury and Atcham council has reported selling 108 dwellings, of which 107 were under the right to buy scheme implemented in the 1980 Housing Act.

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold in the northern region in each year since 1980.

Mr. Tracey: Estimated sales of council houses in each region appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are available in the Library:

Financial year	*Issue No.*
1980-81	62
1981-82	63
1982-83	67
1983-84	75
1984-85 and 1985-86	79

For the first three quarters of 1986-87 there were an estimated 4,320 council house sales in the northern region.

Derelict Land Grant (Corby)

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total derelict land grant paid to the Corby district council in 1985-86 and 1986-87, respectively;

(2) what is the total derelict land grant *(a)* paid and *(b)* approved, so far to the Corby district council in 1987-88.

Mr. John Patten: Derelict land grant paid to Corby district council since 1985-86 is:

	£ million
1985-86	2·13
1986-87	4·03
[1]1987-88	Nil

[1] To date.

Corby district council has received a capital resource allocation for 1987-88 of £3·4 million to cover expenditure on DLG reclamation schemes already approved. Grant will be paid to reimburse them for 100 per cent. of the actual costs incurred.

County Hall, Wakefield

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that a a public inquiry is held into the future of the county hall, Wood street, Wakefield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Any question of a public inquiry would need to be considered in the context of the normal planning procedures.

House Prices

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the average house price, at the mortgage completion stage, in *(a)* south-west England, *(b)* south-east England excluding Greater London, *(c)* East Anglia, *(d)* the midlands, *(e)* north England, *(f)* Scotland, and *(g)* Wales.

Mr. Tracey: The average price of houses mortgaged to the building societies in the east and west midlands in the final quarter of 1986 was £29,691 and in the three regions of the north of England was £26,751. The figures for the other areas are in table 1.13*(b)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 28, which is available in the Library.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 18 December 1986, *Official Report*, columns *612-13*, when the final stage of the Government's review of the emergency plans and procedures in the event of a nuclear accident in the United Kingdom or abroad, following the accident at Chernobyl, will be complete; and if it is the Government's intention to place a copy of this review in the Library when it is available.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the final paragraph of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's answer of 18 December 1986, in which she stated that a further statement would be issued when planning is complete.

Housing and Planning Act 1986

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to inform tenants about the terms of the Housing and Planning Act 1986.

Mr. Tracey: The Department's booklet "Your right to buy your home" has been revised to take account of changes introduced by the 1986 Act and copies were sent during February to tenants of council flats and maisonettes. The distribution was followed by a series of advertisements in the national press drawing attention to the new booklet, which tenants can obtain by sending in a freepost coupon. Further steps will be taken to draw the attention of the tenants to the other housing provisions of the Act where appropriate.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the additional cost arising in *(a)* compensation payments, *(b)* redundancy and *(c)* other payments as a result of the Government's delay in finalising the terms for staff compensation as a result of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: None. The report of the London and metropolitan government staff commission has noted that the attitude of the trade unions was in large measure responsible for the delay in settling the compensation terms.

Derelict Land

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of derelict land have been cleared in the northern region in each year since 1979; and at what cost.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1979, the following areas of land in the northern region (the counties of Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear) have been reclaimed with the assistance of derelict land grant:

Year	Area reclaimed (acres)	Approved expenditure (£ million)
1979-80	755	6·157
1980-81	743	6·847
1981-82	753	5·260
1982-83	694	9·805
1983-84	403	8·748
1984-85	1,210	10·411
1985-86	484	11·615

Canoeing

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will hold discussions with the Countryside Commission about the impact of the activities of canoeists on the congestion of rivers, the problems of countryside access and the level of damage to river banks; and what consideration he has given to introducing legislation to control the use of canoes;

(2) if he will request the Nature Conservancy Council to prepare a report on the activities of canoeists, with particular reference to how rapidly the sport of canoeing is being established and the implications for countryside conservation and wild life; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am aware of the potential conflict between the interests of canoeists and other water-based activities, particularly angling. Canoe users can cause in some instances damage to river banks. However, I am not satisfied that there is any serious risk to conservation from their activities nationally. I do not therefore see any need to discuss the matter with the Countryside Commission or to ask the Nature Conservancy Council to prepare a specific report since they already work with these canoeist groups as necessary. No legislation to control the use of canoes is contemplated. Disputes between river users are best settled by local negotiation.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of grant aid the Government made available in 1986-87 and 1987-88 to the Nature Conservancy Council; how many staff are employed full and part-time; and what percentage of its total expenditure is represented by the Government grant.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government allocated grant-in-aid to the nature Conservancy council of £32·1 million in 1986-87, and £36·5 million in 1987-88. At 1 April 1987 715 permanent full-time and 84 part-time staff were in post. Government grant will cover 97 per cent. of NCCs planned expenditure in 1987-88.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the activities of the Nature Conservancy Council and, in particular, on its policy towards declaring sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Waldegrave: Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the NCC has a statutory duty to notify sites which it considers to be of special scientific interest. I have received a number of representations about the operation of these provisions ranging from suggestions that the NCC should be given stronger powers of compulsion to proposals for imposing further restrictions on the NCC's existing limited powers. I am satisfied that the present balance is about the right one.

Salcombe Estuary

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the operation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in the light of the Nature Conservancy Council's decision to designate the entire Salcombe estuary as a site of special scientific interest, without first consulting or discussing the matter with the South Hams district council or the hon. Member for South Hams.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. I am satisfied that the Nature Conservancy Council acted in accordance with its statutory obligations in this case.

Environmental Assessment

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he has completed consideration of responses received to the consultation paper on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the European directive on environmental assessment which he issued in April 1986; what steps he proposes to take to implement this directive; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what new legislative provisions he anticipates will be required to supplement the existing town and country planning legislation in order fully to implement the European directive on environmental assessment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The consultation paper of April 1986, includes legislative proposals in relation to projects in England and Wales which fail to be approved under the Town and Country Planning Acts. It is proposed to bring these provisions into effect by statutory instrument under the European Communities Act 1972 before 2 July 1988, the date by which the directive requires member states to take the measures necessary to comply with the directive. The responses to the consultation paper are still being considered.

Urban Programme and Partnership Authorities

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total accumulated loss of rate support grant to the urban programme and partnership authorities since 1979 expressed in 1987 prices.

Mr. Chope: A full answer could only be provided at disproportionate cost and because of the change in grant systems and to the structure of local government, any figure that might be produced would be of doubtful significance. Figures for rate support grant payments to individual authorities are available in the Library.

Newham

Mr Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the block grant, and the housing investment programme allocation for the London borough of Newham for each year since 1979 expressed in constant prices.

Mr John Patten: The information is as follows:

£ million (constant 86/87 prices)

	Block grant	*Housing investment programme allocation*
1979-80	[1]80·7	43·1
1980-81	[1]80.4	36.2
1981-82	71·3	19·8
1982-83	81·4	26·4
1983-84	81·7	23·2
1984-85	73·8	25·5
1985-86	77·3	22·2
1986-87	[2]66·4	21·7
1987-88	[2]75·8	16·8

Cash values have been converted to constant 1986/87 prices using the GDP deflator.

[1] Not comparable with grant paid in later years; arrangements for paying grant changed in 1981/82 when the 'Needs and Resources' elements of grant were replaced by Block Grant.

[2] Not comparable with grant paid in earlier years because of the abolition of the GLC.

[3] Figures for 1987/88 are estimates of likely grant entitlement when the Supplementary Report 1987/88 has been approved by Parliament.

Insulation

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of households which are not insulated to acceptable standards and which will not benefit from the new 90 per cent. grant for insulation.

Mr. Tracey: Precise information is not available, but the Government believe it is sensible to target assistance towards the costs of loft insulation on the households least able to afford it for themselves. Installing or improving loft insulation is generally very cost-effective, and householders with adequate means will find it in their own interest to make the necessary investment.

Longford River, Hampton Hill

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects completion of the current works to protect the river banks at the Longford river, Hampton hill; if he will set out in the *Official Report*, what specific action he will take to reinstate wildlife, trees, flowers, grass and turf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: These works are proceeding well and it is anticipated that the engineering elements will be completed early in June. This will include modifications to the sheet piling in response to representations by residents. A berm will be constructed to encourage plant growth at the water's edge and to provide a suitable habitat for wild life.

The landscaping reinstatement of the areas where contractors' plant has disturbed the banks will begin shortly. This will include seeding with a mix of wild flowers and grasses and planting of acquatic species in the berm.

Council Homes

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to confer on local authorities the power to require council tenants to pay an annual charge, to be refunded at the end of each year, where the tenant, in the opinion of the authority, has kept his or her home in good order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The respective obligations of local authorities as landlords and of their tenants regarding the proper use and maintenance of council dwellings are laid down in the terms of their tenancy agreements, subject to the requirements of the Landlord and Tenants Act 1985 and part IV of the Housing Act 1985 ("the tenants' charter), and we see no need to alter these.

National Parks

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the national park authorities that have requested the designation of areas of land under section 42 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the name of each location and its size; and if he will make a statement on each request.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have each received a request as follows:

National Park	*Location*	*Area*
North York Moors	Lockton High Moor	364ha (910 acres)
Pembrokeshire coast	Fronlas Mynachlogddu	3·5ha (8·5 acres)

In each case the farmer had voluntarily notified the authority of his intentions and an order under section 42 would not have been appropriate.

Public Inquiries

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is in a position to announce the results of his review of the call-in criteria in the light of the undertaking in paragraph 50 of his reply to the fifth report column 43 from the Government Committee, Session 1985-86, on "Planning: Appeal, Call-in and Major Public Inquiries".

Mr. Ridley: As noted in the Government's response to the fifth report from the Environment Committee, Session 1985-86, (Cm 43) the Government's general approach is not to interfere with the jurisdiction of the local planning authority unless it is necessary to do so. Each case must be considered on its individual merits. But after careful consideration, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have concluded that there is no need to depart from the general approach to calling in applications as stated in circular 2/81. We will therefore continue to be very selective about calling in cases for our decision, and applications will in general be called in only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved. Such cases may include, for example, those which in our opinion could have wide effects beyond their immediate locality, which give rise to substantial regional or national controversy which may conflict with national policy on important matters, and those where the interests of national security or of foreign Governments may be involved.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when county emergency planning teams will be told their allocation of emergency feeding equipment, including field cookers, Soyer boilers and food containers, and from where it can be obtained.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Local authorities were informed a month ago that MAFF regional offices would be providing them with updated information on this matter. Letters will shortly be sent to them.

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when local authorities will be notified of the identity of emergency food stocks controlled by his Department to aid them in making their emergency feeding plans.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The composition of the food stockpile maintained by my Department is identified in section 11 of the "Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities" which makes it clear that this is a national asset to be used in areas of greatest need. Consideration is being given to whether the release of further information would be helpful to local authorities in their planning.

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when local authorities will be notified of the location and inventory of EEC intervention stocks to aid them in making their emergency feeding plans.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is not the custom to reveal details of EC intervention stocks held in individual stores but this information is maintained and would be released to local authorities if appropriate.

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department have consulted local authorities on the issuing of ration cards for use in a period of international tension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: This is one of the matters with which my Department is concerned as part of its routine civil defence planning. Useful consultations are taking place with representatives of local authorities about the arrangements necessary to implement food control in crisis and war, including the issue of ration cards.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards direct income aids for farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Canoeing

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consult the water authorities regarding the implications of the expansion of canoeing activity for the operation of the Freshwater Fisheries Acts, with particular reference to disturbance of rivers and the impact on freshwater fish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Frozen Foods

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's response to the European Commission's recent questionnaire on the draft directive on quick frozen foods; and if he will make a statement on his Department's assessment as to the likely financial effect of these proposals on both retailers and consumers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has received no questionnaire from the European Commission on the draft directive on quick frozen foods, although I understand that such a questionnaire has been sent to certain non-Governmental Community bodies with an interest in the proposed directive. As the retail provisions of this directive have not yet been agreed I am unable to make an assessment of financial effects on retailers and consumers. My officials continue to make clear in negotiations in Brussels the United Kingdom's opposition to the unduly stringent provisions of the directive in its proposed form.

Salmonella

Mr. John Townend asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in view of the continuing high incidence of salmonella food poisoning, he will consider making mandatory the effective treatment of animal protein feeds against salmonella.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Processed animal protein for use as animal feedingstuff is subject by statute to sample testing to ensure that it is salmonella free. If contamination is detected the manufacturer is required to take corrective action. Similar controls apply to imported animal protein.

Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement setting out the price, in terms of pence per pound, at which the EEC Management Committee of the common agricultural policy agreed to the sale of 181,000 tons of butter to the Soviet Union under Regulation 765/86 at its March meeting; and what will be the cost which the EEC will require to fund after 1989 when member states are repaid the sums involved in subsidising these exports;

(2) if the representative of Her Majesty's Government serving on the Management Committee of the Common Market's agricultural policy supported the decision to extend the scope of regulation 2409/86 to enable the subsidising of butter sales for experimental industrial uses; and if he will make a statement setting out the possible experimental industrial uses which the committee had in mind and the price, in terms of pence per pound, at which butter will be made available for these experimental industrial purposes.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Fishing

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangement he provides for British vessels to fish off the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his policy towards seeking to reduce expenditure on the common agricultural policy in the light of the calculations of its cost to the average family contained in the recent evidence by the consumers in the European Community

Group (UK) to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, a copy of which has been sent to him; and what is his Department's latest estimate of the cost of the Common Agricultural Policy per average family.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Cliff Erosion (Fairlight)

Mr. Warren asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will discuss with the Rother district council, the Southern water authority and the East Sussex county council what action can be taken, as a matter of urgency, to protect houses at Fairlight, in the constituency of Hastings and Rye, faced with imminent destruction by the collapse of cliffs into the sea.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is for the coast protection authority — Rother District Council in this case — to promote such schemes as it wishes to carry out to protect the Fairlight area. I understand that the council has engaged consultants to study the problem and that a report is expected in June.

TRANSPORT

A40 Headington Junction

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the representations from the hon. Member for Oxford East concerning congestion at the A40 Headington junction, he will make a statement on his proposals for alleviating this problem.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A scheme for grade separation at the A40 Headington junction is one of the 82 additions to the national trunk road construction programme which we announced on 28 April. The next step will be the appointment of design agents to investigate possible options for this major improvement. Meanwhile, we are considering with Oxfordshire county council a small modification to the layout of the roundabout to reduce traffic delays in the interim.

I acknowledge my hon. Friend's campaign and concern for the scheme.

Severn Crossing

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the date when tenders are to be invited for the second Severn crossing, the proposed date when work is to commence and the proposed completion date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I informed the House on 6 November 1986 and 3 February this year that we wish to be in a position to provide the second Severn crossing by the mid-1990s, if the build-up of traffic needs it by then and Parliament so decides. This is a large and complex scheme, and many detailed investigations and consultations will have to be carried out before tenders can be invited. The next step is to appoint consultants for these tasks, and competitive bids will be invited shortly from suitable firms.

Airports Policy

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider an investigation into a long-term strategy for Britain's airports making provision for increases in passenger movements balanced with protection of the environment, into the next century.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the 1985 White Paper "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542) adequately sets out a strategy for the provision of airport capacity and associated environmental protection.

A1 (Roadworks)

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many separate roadworks there are on the A1(M) from 15 miles south of Wetherby to Darlington and from the junction of the A19 with the A1 near Thirsk to five miles north of Middlesbrough; in each case, what is the area of road with less than full two-lanes either way unrestricted traffic; when each set of works began; what is the likely cost of each; when each was due under contract to be completed; and when each is likely to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: With roadworks, the position changes daily. The position on 30 April 1987 was as follows:

Schemes	*Length of lane closure*	*Start date*	*Cost*	*Contract completion date*
	A1 from 15 miles south of Wetherby to Darlington			
Baldersby Junction Improvement	½ mile north bound + south bound nearside lanes closed	April 1986	£2·29 million	October 1987
Allerton Park carriageway repairs	1 mile contraflow. South bound carriageway closed	March 1987	£0·27 million	May 1987
Wetherby Bypass construction	½ mile of partial contraflow	August 1986	£9·9 million	August 1988
	½ mile single lane north + southbound			

Schemes	Length of lane closure	Start date	Cost	Contract completion date
Bramham Crossroads carriageway repairs	50 yards of lane closure in each direction	30 April 1987 for 1 day	£1,000	—
Brotherton carriageway reconstruction	1¼ miles contraflow north bound carriageway closed	November 1986	£1·1 million	June 1987
A19 from A168/A1 junction to 5 miles north of Middlesbrough				
Swale Bridge repairs to bridge	½ mile contraflow	February 1987	£0·134 million	May 1987
Thirsk Bypass to Richmond Farm	1½ miles nearside lane	30 April 1978 for 1 day		
Routine inspection	closure in both carriageways			

It is not possible to forecast precise completion dates. Some of these schemes are likely to be completed in advance of the contract date.

Motorways (Central Barriers)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *7*, he will take steps to identify the local contractors responsible for erecting programme central reservation barriers on motorways constructed without them, stating the number of contracts made and the number which will be checked by the progress described in his written answer of 8 April, *Official Report*, column *249*.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It will take some time to collect this information and it is possible that all the information will not be available. I will write to the hon. Member when we have assebled information that is available.

Written-off Vehicles

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that vehicles written off by insurance companies but subsequently restored for use are subjected to a standard test of roadworthiness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering with the police, the insurers and others the problems arising from the continued use of written-off vehicles and vehicle documentation. My hon. Friend's proposal is one of several options available. Any solution would need to be justifiable in terms of accident and crime prevention and consumer protection and to be effective in dealing with all or most written-off vehicles.

Marques (Inquiry Report)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he received the report from the wreck commissioner on the Marques inquiry; and when he intends to publish it.

Mr. Moore: The wreck commissioner made his report to me on 24 April 1987 and it was published on 1 May.

Humber Bridge

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the amount of Government loans now owing by the Humber Bridge Board; and what proposals he has for writing them down.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest published accounts show that at 31 March 1986 the debt on the bridge was made up as follows:

	£
Department of Transport	199,733,310
Public Works Loans Board	45,894,761
Bond	100,000
Temporary Loans	10,390,000
	256,118,071

In their response last July to the report on tolled estuarial crossings by the Select Committee on Transport, the Government acknowledged that the Humber bridge was a special case, and that proposals for dealing with its financial problems were still awaited from the Humber bridge board. Officials from the Department and the board have produced jointly an analysis of various measures, including the write-off of some debt, which might be adopted to tackle the financial problems of the bridge. This should help the board to decide what proposals to put to me, and then provide an agreed basis for discussion. We will consider reasonable and realistic ways of putting the bridge finances on a sound footing. It is for the board to produce proposals as it has sole responsibility for managing the bridge.

European Year of the Environment

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps the Department of Transport is taking to mark European Year of the Environment.

Mr. Moore: As a contribution to the European Year of the Environment, my Department is today publishing a booklet "Transport and the Environment", which sets out its policies towards the environment—for road, rail sea and air. I am placing copies in the Library of the House.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport how the rescinding of the letter of October 1986 to British Rail which instructed British Rail not to make advance payments to Eurotunnel was communicated; if he will publish all documents involved in the rescinding; and if he gave any guidance to British Rail on the sources of revenue which it might make available for advance payments to Eurotunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail was advised by letter on 17 March that as a result of the provisions in clause 40 of the Channel Tunnel Bill which forbids Government grants to British Rail in respect of international rail services, it would not be contrary to the treaty for it to include in its proposed contract with Eurotunnel a provision to make advance toll payments, if it judged this to be commercially attractive.

However, British Rail is not currently contemplating the making of advance toll payments of this kind. What is currently under negotiation between BR, SNCF and Eurotunnel is some form of reservation fee for the use of the tunnel, to be paid on a monthly basis when the tunnel is open and to be offset against toll payments. There is no question of contravening the treaty by allowing Government funds to be used for this purpose.

British Rail

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the nature of his Department's financial responsibility for losses made, or undertakings given, by British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has no financial responsibility for losses made or undertakings given by British Rail, other than in respect of those activities for which he has a duty under section 3 of the Railways Act 1974. Clause 40 of the Channel tunnel Bill now before Parliament excludes international rail services associated with the Channel tunnel project from those provisions.

DEFENCE

Cruise Missiles

14. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the number of cruise missiles currently based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: Most recently, a number of hon. Members tabled questions on this subject which I answered on 24 March.

37. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will seek a meeting with the Belgian Minister of Defence to discuss the decision of the Belgian Government to cease deployment of cruise missiles so long as negotiations on intermediate nuclear forces in Geneva are in progress.

Mr. Younger: There will be an opportunity to meet Defence Ministers from other NATO countries at the spring meeting of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group.

Tornado

15. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the availability of radar equipment for the Tornado.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of Foxhunter radars on order for the Tornado ADV have now been delivered. Although these radars do not fully meet RAF requirements they are contributing to our air defence capability and the first aircraft have now been declared to NATO. We are discussing a programme of improvements with GEC Avionics and, subject to agreement on appropriate contractual conditions, look forward to receiving equipment to the required standard in due course.

32. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are being taken by his Department to bring the Foxhunter radar for the Tornado up to Royal Air Force requirements.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 2 April.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF Tornado aircraft have crashed to date.

Mr. Freeman: Twelve.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to how many Italian and German Tornado aircraft have crashed to date.

Mr. Freeman: The Royal Air Force maintains close links with the Italian and German Air Forces to exchange information about accidents in order to prevent recurrences elsewhere. However the public release of national aircraft accident statistics is a matter for the respective Governments.

Single-Role Mine Hunters

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the results of the tender for the single-role mine hunters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Tenders have only recently been received and it will be some time before I can announce the results of the competition.

Land

17. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of acres of land in the United Kingdom currently in the ownership of his Department; and how this figure compares with those for five and 10 years before.

Mr. Freeman: At 1 October 1986 landholdings were 592,168 acres. This compares with 615,374 acres in 1981 and 627,801 acres in 1976.

Trident

18. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the financial savings at 1987-88 prices which would arise from the immediate cancellation of Trident in terms of planned future expenditure forgone, net of costs already incurred or committed, together with default penalties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The savings arising from the cancellation of Trident would depend upon the costs of cancellation and these in turn would be based upon contractors properly incurred liabilities at termination. These costs should be less than the total amount committed, which currently stands at about £3 billion out of a current total estimate at 1986-87 prices of a little under £9·3 billion. There are no punitive cancellation charges involved.

The project will be recosted at 1987-88 prices towards the end of this year when the estimate is revised.

35. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the Trident programme is being spent in the northern region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Estimates of the cost of the Trident programme are not available on a regional basis.

Co-operation (Projects)

19. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet the French Defence Minister to discuss co-operation on defence projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I next expect to meet M. Giraud at the meeting of the independent European programme group in June.

United Kingdom-Irish Republic (Border Operations)

20. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the effectiveness of military operations on the border between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

Mr. Stanley: Military operations on the border between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic are mounted in support of the RUC. In recent months the Security Forces have mounted a number of successful operations against terrorist activity in the border areas. These successes can be attributed to the dedication and professionalism of the RUC, the Regular Army and the UDR. The Garda have also been successful in thwarting a number of terrorist attacks. Nevertheless the IRA remains capable of exploiting the border in order to carry out murderous attacks. The development of enhanced security co-operation is a high priority for the two police forces and for the British and Irish Governments.

Cyprus

22. **Mr. Conway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on morale of British forces based in Cyprus and on the training given within the sovereign base areas.

Mr. Freeman: The morale of all British Forces serving in Cyprus remains high. They receive regular military training to the maximum extent possible, given their commitment to operational and security duties. They also take full advantage of excellent adventure training and sporting facilities.

Pakistan

21. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Prime Minister of Pakistan; and what subjects were discussed.

23. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his meeting with the Pakistan Foreign Affairs Minister.

Mr. Younger: I met the Pakistan Prime Minister on April 7. We discussed a range of defence subjects of mutual interest including the possible purchase by Pakistan of type 23 frigates.

BAOR

24. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to visit the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I hope to visit the British Army of the Rhine later this year.

Nuclear Weapons

25. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received urging him to increase the number of short range nuclear weapons in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 24 March at column *156*. Since then, as my hon. Friend will be aware, the Soviet Union has made new INF proposals which are being carefully examined in conjunction with our allies.

29. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the adequacy of the United Kingdom early warning system in relation to an attack with nuclear weapons and the time afforded to the public to take shelter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I am not aware of any such representations recently.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 19 January at column *455*.

34. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning Her Majesty's Government's role in the implementation of the Montebello decision of the NATO planning group, regarding short-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: Since the beginning of the year my Department has received about 20 representations.

Hunter-Killer Submarines

26. **Mr. Neale** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to change the role of Britain's hunter-killer subenarines.

Mr. Stanley: There are no plans to change the role of our SSNs which is primarily anti-submarine warfare.

Strategic Defence Initiative

27. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the value to date of contracts placed by the United States Government on the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs Shields) on Tuesday 9 December 1986 at column *139*.

RAF (Air Defence)

28. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Defence, if he has any plans to improve the current air defence capability of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to update Britain's air defences.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 22 April at column *589*.

European Defence Ministers

30. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to meet the Defence Ministers of Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, and Bulgaria to discuss the level of conventional forces in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I have no such plans. We are, however, taking an active and positive part in the continuing negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions dealing with conventional forces, and in discussions on the mandate for new negotiations on conventional stability.

Army Recruits

31. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the mistreatment of Army recruits.

Mr. Freeman: Recent publicity concerning alleged mistreatment of young soldiers has resulted in a number of representations from hon. Members and others being received in the Department. In addition the hon. Member came to see me, with other hon. Members, on 8 April to discuss the matter. I have since written to the hon. Member.

Far East

33. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the far east.

Mr. Younger: The main aims of my visit to south-east Asia, which took place from 23 March to 1 April, were to

reaffirm the United Kingdom's interest in the stability and security of the area, as exemplified by our support for ASEAN and our membership of the five power defence arrangements; to discuss defence matters of mutual interest; and to support sales of British defence equipment.

In Thailand, which I visited from 23-25 March, I had useful discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, the Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, and with the Commanders-in-Chief. I also paid visits to the war cemetery at Kanchanaburi, where I laid a wreath in memory of those who died in the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway in 1942-43, and to the Kwai River bridge.

In Brunei (25-27 March), I had an audience with His Majesty The Sultan and useful discussions with the Deputy Minister of Defence and the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. I also visited units of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces and the British battalion currently stationed in Brunei, the 7th Gurkha Rifles.

In Malaysia (27-30 March) I had valuable talks with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Deputy Minister of Defence. Finally, in Singapore (30 March-1 April), I had constructive discussions with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, and the Minister for Trade and Industry; I visited units of the Republic of Singapore Armed Forces and a number of defence companies, including the British-owned Avimo (Singapore) Pte Ltd, whose new factory I opened; and I laid a wreath at Kranji War Cemetery in honour of those who are buried and commemorated there.

In all four countries, discussions were cordial and friendly, and I was able to build on the already close and constructive defence relationship that exists between the United Kingdom and a part of the world whose stability and security remain of importance both to this country and to the West in general.

Small Businesses

36. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department is offering to small businesses to identify and exploit export opportunities for defence equipment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Through the Defence Export Services Organisation, the Ministry offers advice to all United Kingdom companies on defence market prospects on a worldwide, regional or country basis and, in conjunction with our defence representative posts overseas provides a wide range of follow-up support and assistance to companies seeking to export their products and services.

Boarding School Allowance

38. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to alter the Government's support for the boarding school allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Boarding school allowance continues to be justified by the need to help Service parents to provide a stable education for their children. As with other allowances, the rate is subject to review from time to time.

Sidewinder Missile (Incident)

39. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in view of the accidental release of a Sidewinder missile over Lapford, North Devon on 8 April, he will review overflying of populated areas and control of airborne equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Great care is taken in all aspects of military flying to maintain the highest possible standards of flight safety including the secure carriage of practice weapons and equipment. Pilots are fully instructed on the stringent regulations which govern their training activities within the United Kingdom and which specify that military aircraft should not fly at low level directly over major centres of population. It is however impractical for these aircraft to avoid all populated areas during the course of their essential training flights.

All safety aspects of flying activity are under continual review and whenever incidents occur, as happened at Lapford on 8 April, an inquiry is invariably held to establish its cause. If appropriate, modifications are made to equipment and operating procedures to prevent recurrences. While I see no need for a general review in the light of the incident on 8 April I will however write to my hon. Friend on the outcome of the unit inquiry as soon as it is available.

Scott Lithgow (Orders)

40. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the delay in placing an order with Scott Lithgow for a range mooring vessel and two powered lighters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Apart from representations that have been made by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on behalf of Scott Lithgow, others have been made on behalf of other shipbuilders anxious to gain an opportunity to tender for these vessels. It is still my wish, however, to place these contracts with Scott Lithgow provided that the company can meet the terms and conditions outlined by my hon. Friend on 28 January 1986 at column 449.

European Fighter Aircraft

41. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 22 April 1987 to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

44. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the European fighter aircraft will make its first flight.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The EFA programme is at present in a period of definition refinement and risk reduction and the development programme has not yet been agreed. It is therefore too early to say when the first flight would be.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when development work on the European fighter aircraft will commence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current international target date to begin full development of EFA is 1 August this year, but it is unlikely that all the relevant decisions in the

four collaborating nations will have been taken by that date. The Government will reach a decision on the project when all the relevant information is available.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

42. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the prospects for employment at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards now that the approved contractors are in the yards.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government remain committed to a core programme of work for Rosyth and Devonport dockyards to maintain vital strategic assets. The dockyards will also be in a position to tender in competition for further work from the unallocated MOD ship repair programme and to bid for other work.

Subject to maintenance of the required strategic capacity, levels of employment at the dockyards are matters for the commercial management.

Norwegian and Barents Seas (Deployment)

43. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning naval deployments in the Norwegian and Barents Seas.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 10 February 1987 at column *185*.

Royal Navy (SAM Missiles)

45. **Mr. Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what orders have been placed for surface-to-air missiles for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Annual "Statements on the Defence Estimates" include information of such orders. For current main surface to air missiles we have placed five orders for Sea Dart, three for conventional launch Sea Wolf and one for vertical launch Sea Wolf.

Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment Vessel

46. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to order the next auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: If the terms stated by my right hon. Friend on 24 April 1986 at column 434 are met, I expect an order to be placed in the autumn with fabrication starting next year.

Submarine Exports

47. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with foreign Defence Ministers concerning submarine exports.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are a number of prospects for the export of submarines which my right hon. Friend has been able to discuss during some of his overseas visits. However it is not the usual practice to disclose confidential details of defence sales business.

Helicopter Procurement

48. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on collaborative helicopter procurement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It remains our policy to procure helicopters to meet the requirements of our forces through collaboration with our allies, whenever it is practicable and cost-effective to do so. Thus we are, as my right hon. Friend made clear in his statement to the House on 9 April, maintaining our full support for the Anglo-Italian EH101. We are also engaged, together with our Italian, Dutch and Spanish partners, in studies of a light attack helicopter based upon the Agusta A129.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence which countries were visited by representatives of the Defence Export Services Organisation in 1986.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Representatives of the DESO travelled widely in 1986 to some 50 countries interested in British defence equipment. But because of the confidentiality of many of the transactions involved it is not the practice to list individual countries where discussions have been taking place.

Upholder Class Submarines

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the first four Upholder class submarines will enter Royal Naval service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to reveal acceptance dates for Royal Navy ships. However, I can say that HMS Upholder, the first of class, is expected to enter service in 1988.

Minesweepers

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many minesweepers are in Royal Naval service; and how many are on order.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 41 mine counter measures vessels in service with the Royal Navy. Two Hunt class dual role minehunter/sweepers and one Sandown class single role minehunter are on order.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been discharged for involvement with paramilitary organisations.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answers my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North on 18 February 1987, at column *688*, and 8 April 1986, at column *106*. I have nothing further to add.

Fighter Squadrons

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Lightning, Phantom and Tornado squadrons are currently tasked with United Kingdom air defence.

Mr. Stanley: As at 1 April 1987, there were two Lightning and five Phantom squadrons available for United Kingdom air defence tasks. One of the Phantom squadrons has begun to re-equip with Tornado F3 and is planned to become operational as a Tornado squadron later this year.

RAF Aircraft

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Air Force aircraft types are currently employed in the tanker role.

Mr Stanley: The RAF currently employs Victor K2, VC1010 K2 and K3, Tristar K1 and Hercules C1K aircraft in the tanker role.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Air Force aircraft types are currently provided with hardened shelters.

Mr. Stanley: Hardened shelters are currently provided for Tornado (ADV and GR1), Phantom, and Buccaneer aircraft and for Jaguar and Harrier GR3 aircraft based in RAF Germany. United Kingdom-based Jaguars and Harriers have a number of forward and dispersed operating options.

Royal Ordnance PLC

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent orders have been placed with Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice of the Ministry to reveal details of contracts placed with individual contractors as the information is commercial in confidence. However, the overall value of direct HQ contracts placed with RO plc in the year ended 31 March 1987 was £163 million.

Submarine Orders

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the latest position regarding submarine orders.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently eight submarines on order, of which five—a Trident SSBN, a Trafalgar class SSN and three Upholder class SSKs—were ordered last year. On future orders, I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 16 January 1986 at column *642* of the *Official Report* and that given to my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) on 24 March 1987 at column *139* of the *Official Report*.

Zircon Project

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence why, pursuant to his answer of 10 April, he will not identify separately expenditure on the project Zircon in his forthcoming White Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to give details of intelligence matters.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he or his Department has been consulted by the United States of America on that country's contingency plan for the deployment of chemical weapons in Europe; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the United States contingency plans for the deployment of chemical weapons in Europe in time of crisis include options for the deployment of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 24 July 1986 at columns *489-490*.

NATO Groups

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the grades and ranks of the civil servants and military officers who attend each of the following North Atlantic Treaty Organisation bodies: the high level group, the special consultative group, the nuclear planning group, the study group of the nuclear planning group and the defence planning committee.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

W-79 Nuclear Warhead

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has received from the United States authorities concerning a potential enhanced radiation capability in relation to the W-79 nuclear shell deployed by the United States of America in Europe;

(2) whether Her Majesty's Government's approval is required prior to the allocation of W-79 nuclear warheads by the United States to its custodial units supporting the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has received from the United States authorities about the deployment by the United States Army of W-79 nuclear warheads in the NORTHAG area of NATO;

(4) what information he has as to when deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell by the United States of America in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation commenced.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Horses (Polo)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the proportion of private horses moved by military transport as participants in representative polo teams that belong to, or are ridden by, other than commissioned officers.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not readily available. It could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Bloodhound

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence when Bloodhound entered RAF service.

Mr. Stanley: The current Bloodhound MK2 system entered RAF service in March 1964. Since then, there has been a number of modifications to the system to enhance its capability.

Oerlikon/Skyguard System

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom Royal Air Force bases are protected by Oerlikon/Skyguard.

Mr. Stanley: The Skyguard anti-aircraft system is in service at RAF Waddington.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence from which source the Royal Air Force acquired the Oerlikon/Skyguard system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Oerlikon/Skyguard anti aircraft system now in service with the RAF Regiment was captured from Argentina during the Falklands conflict.

Nuclear Capability

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to which countries possess a military nuclear capability, showing in each case the implications of such capability for the defence of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Younger: Apart from our NATO allies, France and the United States, two other countries — the Soviet Union and China — are nuclear weapons states; both also possess the associated delivery systems which could threaten the United Kingdom. In 1974 India exploded a nuclear device. Several other countries have carried out research into nuclear weapons and a few of these countries may be close to developing the capability to make them.

Aviation Support Ships

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to make a presentation to industry about the proposed aviation support ships.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No decision has been taken on a presentation to industry on the concept of the aviation support ship.

Missiles

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made over the development of the airborne short-range anti-aircraft missile and the collaborative project for a medium range stand-off missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom is collaborating with Germany and Norway on the current project definition (PD) phase for the Advanced Short Range Air to Air Missile (ASRAAM) which is expected to be completed in the autumn. A second phase of PD is then planned so that areas of technical risk may be further reduced and costs defined.

Negotiations are proceeding between the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Canada on the Memorandum of Understanding governing the principles for the collaborative modular stand off weapons programme.

Nuclear Weapons (Deployment)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the appproximate number of nuclear *(a)* intermediate range, *(b)* short and *(c)* battlefield weapons deployed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact, respectively.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Tucano

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many flying hours have so far been logged for each of the Tucano aircraft at Boscombe Down.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no Tucano aircraft at Boscombe Down.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence by how many months the Shorts Tucano programme is delayed in relation to the original contract programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Shorts advise that the programme is currently delayed by about eight months. They expect to recover this delay later in the delivery programme.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when RAF basic flying training will commence with the Shorts Tucano.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Basic flying training is expected to start next year.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with the full ground fatigue test for the Shorts Tucano.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current Tucano fatigue test is progressing satisfactorily and has so far achieved about one quarter of the required test programme.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the Shorts Tucano will receive its release for service from Boscombe Down;

(2) if he will make a statement concerning progress with the Tucano aircraft at Boscombe Down;

(3) how many Short Tucano aircraft are currently at ETPS Boscombe Down.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Shorts advise that the first two Tucano aircraft produced under their contract are planned to be delivered to Boscombe Down this month. A release to service is expected later in the year. There are at present no plans for the Empire Test Pilots' School to be equipped with Tucano aircraft.

Skyflash

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether there have been any delays in deliveries of Skyflash to the RAF; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many Skyflash missiles are currently on order for the RAF.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For reasons of confidentiality, it is not my Department's practice to reveal the number of missiles on order, but I can confirm that current deliveries of Skyflash to the RAF have been on schedule.

Medium Range Anti-Aircraft Missile

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the advanced medium range anti-aircraft missile will enter Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The AMRAAM is planned to enter RAF service in the 1990s.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Homelessness

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures for the number of children in local authority care because their family is homeless; and if he will give this information for England as a whole, greater London, the metropolitan authorities excluding London, non-metropolitan authorities, and for each English local authority area.

Mrs. Currie: A child may be taken into care for a number of reasons of which homelessness may be a contributory factor, although not identified as a specific cause in the statistics. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 6 November 1986 at column *594-96* which gave the 1984 figures by local authorities where the specific cause for a child being in care was that his or her family had been made homeless. The additional information requested is given in the table:

	Number
Metropolitan district	384
Shire counties	244
Greater London	85
England	713

A breakdown of these figures by local authority for 1985 is not yet available. The provisional total for England is 598 children, a decrease of 16 per cent. over 1984. This compares with an 8 per cent. decline in the total figures for children in care.

District Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the capital and revenue expenditure for the Worcester district health authority for each year from 1978-79 onwards;

(2) if he will give the capital and revenue expenditure for the Bromsgrove and Redditch district health authority for each year from 1978-79 onwards.

Mr. Newton: The information available centrally is shown in the table. Before 1 April 1982 both districts formed part of the Hereford and Worcester area health authority and information on a district basis was not collected centrally. If my hon. Friend wishes to seek information for the earlier years I suggest that he contacts the chairmen of the district health authorities.

	Worcester and District Health Authority		*Bromsgrove and Redditch Health Authority*	
	Revenue £ million	*Capital £ million*	*Revenue £ million*	*Capital £ million*
1982-83	35·5	2·0	18·1	1·2
1983-84	38·0	1·4	19·7	6·7
1984-85	40·0	1·9	21·4	10·3
1985-86	42·8	3·0	23·2	7·2

Notes:
(1) The figures for revenue expenditure are those shown in the annual financial accounts of the health authorities. Those for capital expenditure also include expenditure specifically on behalf of those districts which is shown in the annual accounts of the West Midlands regional health authority.
(2) Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded although for Worcester, the figures for the years 1982-83 to 1984-85 include a small element representing family practitioner committee administration expenses.

Thalassaemia

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that thalassaemia be listed as a chronic sickness and its sufferers entitled to free prescriptions for their condition.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to include thalassaemia in the list of medical conditions which confer entitlement to exemption from prescription charges.

NHS (Staff)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service staff there were in the United Kingdom in *(a)* June 1979 and *(b)* February 1986, respectively.

Mr. Newton: Figures for September 1979 and September 1985 are shown in the table. Figures were not collected centrally for June 1979 and February 1986.

NHS directly employed staff in post[1] at 30 September United Kingdom

	Whole-time equivalent[2]
1979	976,800
1985	1,030,200

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and non-Medical Manpower, Welsh Office, Scottish Health Services Common Services Agency, Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland).

[1] Includes agency nursing and midwifery staff. Includes all permanent (whole-time, part-time, honorary) and locum medical and dental staff in the hospital and community health services. (Locum figures for Northern Ireland are not included.)

[2] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (100) whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff are employed in each category in the National Health Service in the northern region; and how many were so employed in 1978.

Mr. Newton: The figures are shown in the table.

NHS staff in post in Northern Regional Health Authority[1] at 30 September

Whole-time equivalent

	1978	1986 (Provisional)
Medical and Dental[2]	2,450	2,820
Nursing and Midwifery[3,4]	22,970	27,350
Professional and Technical (ex Works)[5]	3,240	4,510
Works	370	470
Maintenance	1,360	1450
Administrative and Clerical	5,700	6,260
Ambulance (including officers)	1,430	1,400
Ancillary[5]	11,740	9,200
Total directly employed staff	49,250	53,470

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.

[2] Includes Hospital Practitioners, Part-time Medical and Dental officers (clinical assistants) and locums.

[3] Includes agency staff.

[4] Figures not adjusted to take account of the change in nurses' working hours in 1980 (reduced from 40 to 37·5 hours weekly).

[5] On 1 April 1984 Operating Department Assistants (ODAs) transferred from Ancillary to Professional and Technical staff group. Figures for 1986 are not therefore strictly comparable with those for 1978. (At 31 March 1984 there were some 120 (wte) ODAs employed by the Northern Regional Health Authority).

NHS (Statistics)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to assemble centrally statistics relating to *(a)* outpatients waiting periods and *(b)* accommodation occupied by health service personnel in possession of district health authorities in regions since 1982 in the four metropolitan regional health authorities.

Mrs. Currie: Yes, we are looking at the possibility for the future of collecting the statistics indicated.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown, by type of beneficiary and type of benefit, of the savings that accrue from the existence of the overlapping benefit regulations, and of the total of these savings each year since 1979.

Mr. Lyell: There are a number of contingencies such as sickness, unemployment, disability, pregnancy, retirement and widowhood which since the start of the national insurance scheme in 1948 have brought into play the overlapping benefits provisions. Because more than one of the contingencies may apply simultaneously to the same person, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of benefit savings from the overlapping benefit provisions. However, if, contrary to well-established practice, entitlement to income maintenance benefits did not overlap, it is estimated that aggregated benefit expenditure would be increased in 1986 prices by some £5 billion.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* local authority associations and *(c)* other organisations or bodies regarding the proposed new housing benefit arrangements to be introduced in April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: The changes to the housing benefit scheme proposed for 1988 have been the subject of wide and continuous consultation since the Green paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517) was published in June 1985.

Most recently, the local authority associations were consulted under statutory arrangements on the draft regulations giving effect to the changes. Their comments ranged widely, covering major issues such as the level of maximum benefit as well as a great many suggestions on points of detail.

The draft regulations were also distributed for information to individual local authorities and to other organisations on request. A number of representations were made as a result, again ranging from comments on major issues to purely technical points. A revised version of the draft regulations will be issued shortly following our careful consideration of the comments we received.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each region, including Scotland and Wales, his most recent estimate of the total numbers *(a)* claiming and *(b)* dependent on supplementary benefits; and if he will also list the numbers: (1) claiming supplementary allowance, (2) claiming supplementary pension, (3) dependent on supplementary pensions and (4) dependent on supplementary allowance.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish details of the changes in total statutory sick pay and sickness benefit expenditure on short term sickness in each year from 1983-84 to 1986-87 that resulted from the introduction of statutory sick pay and the April 1986 changes showing, as far as possible (1) expenditure changes that resulted from the replacement of sickness benefit rates with a different structure of statutory sick pay rates, (2) expenditure changes that resulted from administrative changes, (3) estimated revenue from statutory sick pay tax and national insurance liability and (4) the expenditure effects of other changes;

(2) if he will publish details of total expenditure on short term sickness in each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87 showing, as far as possible (1) a breakdown of expenditure between sickness benefit and statutory sick pay, (2) a breakdown between administrative costs and actual payments of the two types of support, (3) the average weekly payment made under the two types of provision and (4) supplementary benefit and related housing benefit expenditure on the short term sick;

(3) if he will publish details of claims for statutory sick pay and expenditure on statutory sick pay for each year of its operation showing, as far as possible (1) the total number of claims and payments made, (2) the extent of overpayment and underpayment by employers, (3) total expenditure on the scheme, (4) a breakdown of this expenditure between statutory sick pay payments and administrative costs and (5) an estimate of the costs of statutory sick pay payments net of tax and national insurance revenue.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have the information that is available as soon as possible.

Operation Waiting Periods

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the average waiting period in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority area for *(a)* a joint replacement operation, *(b)* a prostate operation and *(c)* a cataract operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Information on average waiting periods for operations is available centrally from a 10 per cent. sample of hospital activity records. The numbers in this sample are too small for reliable estimates to be made for individual health districts. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority for the information he requires.

Factor VIII

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of haemophiliacs who have been injected with blood clotting agent Factor VIII; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Precise figures are not held centrally but it is broadly estimated that up to 3,000 haemophilia A patients may use Factor VIII products either on an intermittent or a regular basis.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the insurance industry concerning compensation for haemophiliacs who have contracted AIDS following the administering of Factor VIII, and whose next of kin have claimed against the companies; what response he has given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are not aware of any representations from insurance companies on this matter.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Ministers in his Department first became aware that Factor VIII products might contain HIV; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Evidence emerged in the United States of America in 1982 that haemophiliacs were contracting AIDS and although the mechanism of infection was not known, it was presumed that it had been transmitted through the use of blood products such as Factor VIII.

I also refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 7 April, at column *207*.

NHS (London)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what real terms growth is to be expected in the National Health Service in Greater London health authorities, excluding those in inner London, as a result of allocations from his special fund for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available in the form requested. The Greater London health authorities, excluding those in inner London, which have received allocations from the special fund for regions receiving less than national average growth are as follows:

Regional Health Authority	*District Health Authority*	*Special fund allocation 1987-88 (£'000)*
North West Thames	Brent	486
	Hillingdon	450
North East Thames	Haringey	700
South East Thames	Greenwich	400
	Bexley	100
	Bromley	150
South West Thames	Merton & Sutton	450

Allocations to district health authorities are a matter for the appropriate regional health authority and the hon. Member might wish to contact the chairmen of the regional health authorities involved for further detail.

Allocations from the special fund for 1988-89 will be decided when 1988-89 main allocations are known.

District Health Authorities (Budgets)

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the district health authorities whose budgets have increased in real terms in each of the last three years.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally. Responsibility for determining allocations to district health authorities rests with regional health authorities.

Child Abuse

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any estimate of the number of names of children on the child abuse registers of local authorities for the last five years; and what estimate he has made of the change in the level of child abuse in recent years.

Mr. Newton: No. Information about the number of names of children on child abuse registers in England and Wales is not held centrally. However, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children does hold registers which cover about 10 per cent. of the population and its statistics for 1985 show a rise as compared with 1984 of 42 per cent. in reported cases of child abuse overall and of 126·5 per cent. for child sexual abuse. This increase in reported cases may be attributed to increased public and professional awareness of abuse.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of long leaseholders receiving supplementary benefit additional requirements for service charges and ground rent; and what proportion are pensioner households.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the information is not available on which to base an estimate.

Pensioners

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his most recent estimate of the total amount of social security benefits which are not taken up by retirement pensioners; and if he will give a breakdown of the total amount by category of benefit.

Mr. Lyell: Invitations to claim retirement pension are issued automatically to everyone who appears to be

entitled about three to four months before minimum pension age. In consequence, take-up is virtually 100 per cent.

For supplementary pension estimates, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on 30 October 1986 at columns *231-34*. First estimates of the take-up of housing benefit are expected to be published shortly.

NHS Staff (Pay)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any recent representations from nurses or other National Health Service staff regarding pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have received no representations since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the Government's decision to implement in full the recommendations of the review body for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and the professions allied to medicine, and the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration.

Guardians ad Litem

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any extra funding has been made available to local authorities for the provisions of guardians ad litem following the decision of Regina v. Plymouth Juvenile Court ex parte F.

Mrs. Currie: The setting up of the panels of guardians ad litem was one of the new areas of expenditure for which allowance was made in the rate support grant settlement for 1984-85. The matter has been raised in subsequent discussions on the increased pressures that local authorities foresee. These discussions with respect to 1988-89 have just begun. It is, of course, for local authorities to decide the priorities for expenditure between this and other functions.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has taken any action to reduce the period between the appointment of the guardian ad litem and the nomination of a guardian ad litem.

Mrs. Currie: The Department conducted an informal exercise last summer which shows that in over half the areas the time taken to nominate guardians ad litem is under a week. Where delays occur, they are for the local authority responsible for administering the panel of guardians ad litem to resolve, in conjunction with the Courts. The Department has assisted local action by amending regulations to allow a wider range of suitable persons to act as guardians ad litem, and by holding a national conference of all panel administrators. The Department intends to issue further guidance to panel administrators in due course.

Member's Letters

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he anticipates that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will be writing to the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne regarding the contents of a letter, passed to her on 5 March 1987, from Mr. Robert Beaton of 227 Longfield, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Mrs. Currie: My noble Friend wrote to my hon. Friend on 30 April.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will add cystic fibrosis to the list of conditions for which free prescriptions are available.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 15 January at column *303*.

Benefit (Multiple Applications)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many multiple applications for social security benefit have been uncovered in the past 12 months; how many people have been prosecuted; and what sentences have resulted.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Food (S Manual)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the guidelines on average expenditure on food in clause 4736 of the S manual were not based on data relating to the entire sample of the 1979 "Family Expenditure Survey".

Mr. Major: I understand from the chief adjudication officer that the figure of £9 was derived from data in respect of single pensioners, married couple pensioners and single adults under 65 in the lowest 20 per cent. household income bracket as it was considered that these data more accurately reflected expenditure by supplementary benefit claimants than would data from the entire sample. Data from the entire sample would have provided a higher figure of average expenditure on food, resulting in less help by way of dietary additions.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the basis for determining the percentage or proportion of the relevant scale rate for adults used for calculating the dietary figures for children in clause 4736 of the S manual.

Mr. Major: The figure of £9, derived from the 1979 family expenditure survey, was approximately 30 per cent. of the adult householder long-term scale rate at November 1981. I understand from the chief adjudication officer that the figures in respect of children were therefore based on 30 per cent. of the children's scale rates. As data from the family expenditure surveys relate to households rather than to individuals, they do not provide information specifically in respect of children.

Hospitals (Bath)

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet considered the implications of the proposals made by the Bath district health authority on both the Bradford on Avon and Melksham hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Bath district health authority has not yet decided whether to propose any changes in services at the Bradford on Avon and Melksham hospitals. Ministers would become involved only if any formal proposals to reduce or significantly to change the use of beds at these hospitals were produced which could not be agreed with the community health council.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representation there has been by his Department at the series of conferences on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 organised by MIND and RADAR; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Department was not invited to attend these conferences, which I understand were intended principally to brief representatives from the voluntary organisations and local authority social services departments about the provisions of the Act and give them the opportunity of discussing its implications.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown by regional health authority of the numbers of medical personnel and non-medical personnel employed in the National Health Service who have developed AIDS or antibodies to the AIDS virus.

Mr. Newton: The Department does not hold information on the numbers of National Health Service employees who have developed AIDS or who have been identified as antibody positive.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of medical personnel in the United States of America who have developed AIDS or antibodies to the AIDS virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: According to a report in the journal of the American Medical Association (*256* 3231 (1986)), 16,748 adults with AIDS reported to the Centres for Disease Control, Atlanta by 1 May 1986; 922 (5·5 per cent.) were identified as health care workers. Each of these individuals had a history of (other than occupational) exposure known to increase the probability of HIV infection. We are not aware of any published information about health care workers in the United States with antibodies to the AIDS virus.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his Department's policy towards supplying the media with details of the numbers and location of medical personnel who have developed AIDS or antibodies to the AIDS virus;

(2) what is his policy towards the degree of publicity to be given to the numbers and whereabouts of doctors in the National Health Service who have contracted AIDs or who have developed AIDS antibodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The health of medical personnel is subject to the normal rules of medical confidentiality and the Department does not intend that these should be breached in the case of those infected people who have made their condition known to their employing authority. Information of this sort would therefore not be made available to the media.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary State for Social Services how the National Health Service is going to make the drug AZT available for treatment of AIDS; and what is the estimated cost of such treatment in 1987.

Mr. Newton: The manufacturers of Retrovir (AZT) have made arrangements with regional National Health Service staff for a distribution mechanism within their regions that will ensure a continuity of supply to those patients prescribed the drug. The cost of treatment in 1987 will depend on the rate of prescription by National Health Service doctors.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the drug AZT is to be made available for the treatment of AIDS patients in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Newton: Retrovir (AZT) has been available for the treatment of AIDS patients in NHS hospitals since 1 April 1987. There was also limited use of AZT in clinical trials for some months before this.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the drug AZT is available on the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Abortions

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent abortion statistics may be broken down by the postal areas of the women upon whom the abortions were performed.

Mr. Newton: The post codes of the addresses of the women upon whom abortions are performed are shown on the notification forms. These post codes are used to generate local authority and district health authority area codes which are held on the computer file from which abortion statistics are produced. For reasons of maintaining confidentiality, computer files containing post coded data on abortions are not retained.

Statistics are released only for DHA of usual residence, or for other areas which cover, directly or indirectly, populations exceeding 80,000 persons.

NHS (Capital Schemes)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which of the capital schemes listed in appendix D to his National Health Service annual report 1985 are not in full use;

(2) if he will list any National Health Service hospital schemes of more than £2 million completed since those given in appendix D to his National Health Service annual report 1985 which are not in full use.

Mrs. Currie: Detailed information about when all facilities come into full use in new capital developments is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to inquire of the appropriate regional health authorities.

National Insurance Credits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what is his estimate of how many men aged 60 to 64 years are receiving national insurance credits without being required to register as unemployed.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cross-infection

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by region, the numbers of cases of cross-infection for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 12 January at column *123*.

Health Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the decision was taken to stop publishing the annual census of Health Service staff statistics, excluding medical and dental staff; and why.

Mr. Newton: Summary figures from the Department's census of National Health Service non-medical manpower are placed in the Library each quarter. More detailed figures are provided annually in publications such as "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics" and "The Health Service in England Annual Report". The booklet entitled "Health Service Staff Statistics" has not been published since 1983, as it was given lower priority following the introduction of the quarterly counts.

Health Authorities (Staff)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the numbers of non-medical staff employed by district health authorities for 1982-83 and for the latest year available in the manner of the reply to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *218*.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Yorkshire RHA (Expenditure)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the expenditure of the Yorkshire regional health authority for the years 1974 to 1979 on *(a)* revenue and *(b)* capital account.

Mr. Newton: Following are the total expenditure figures recorded in the annual financial accounts of the Yorkshire regional health authority and those of the former area health authorities within that region:

Hospital and community health services

	Revenue £ million	*Capital £ million*
1974-75	166·1	16·7
1975-76	216·9	25·7
1976-77	249·8	22·7
1977-78	279·3	21·4
1978-79	313·5	27·6
1979-80	380·7	30·9

Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded although the figures include a small element representing family practitioner committees' administration expenses.

Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many in-patients, out-patients and day-patients were treated in the northern region in 1986; and how many were so treated in 1983.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry that I cannot give my hon. Friend all the information he seeks. Information on individual patients treated is not available centrally and figures for 1986 are not yet available. The available information is given in the table.

NHS hospitals in Northern RHA

All specialties	*1983*	*1985*
In-patient cases	409,115	433,131
Day cases	66,093	75,473
Out-patient attendances:		
New attendances	557,125	595,232
Total attendances	2,451,627	2,543,549

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the relative costs of caring for a patient in *(a)* the Thames valley hospice and *(b)* a comparable National Health Service bed; and if he has any plans to assist private hospices.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the costs of caring for a patient in individual hospices is not held centrally. The average daily cost of one in-patient in a National Health Service acute hospital is £132·23 a day, but this is not directly comparable with the costs of hospice care. Assistance for private hospices is a matter for individual health authorities. All health authorities have been asked to examine their current provision of services for terminally ill patients and to plan to fill gaps, where possible in collaboration with the voluntary sector.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish information showing the proportion of claims for family income supplement in which it is necessary to contact employers to verify information on earnings; how many of these contacts can be attributable to inadequate wage slips; how many cases arise because the employee does not receive wage slips; what other reasons necessitate checks with employers; and to what extent the incidence of checks with employers has changed since the introduction of family income supplement.

Mr. Major: It is estimated that inquiries to employers on earnings are made in around three quarters of claims for family income supplement. Inquiries are made either because the claimant has not provided the necessary payslips or because further information is needed to establish normal earnings; a breakdown of the overall estimate according to the precise reason for the inquiry is not available. Estimates of the level of inquiries to employers are not regularly made and recorded, but there is no evidence to suggest that there has been any significant change in recent years.

Health Expenditure (London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to write to the hon. Member for Newham, South in answer to his question of Thursday 9 April, *Offical Report*, column 412, relating to the increase or decrease in the expenditure on the National Health Service in the London region.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon Member today.

Hyperlipidaemia

Mr Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what support is given by his Department to the Family Heart Association; and if he will take steps to encourage within the National Health Service the same type of testing for hyperlipidaemia and related matters as that which is currently taking place in the House of Commons.

Mrs. Currie: The Department recognises the good work being carried out by the Family Heart Association. On 27 April, I opened an exhibition in the House to promote its current activities.

Hyperlipidaemia is an inherited condition causing an increase of heart attack, and sometimes stroke, at an early age. It is for the clinicians responsible for the case of such patients to initiate whatever tests they consider appropriate but there is no professional or scientific consensus on the need for general population screening at this time.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what were the reasons in each case why those health authorities listed in his reply of 6 November 1986, *Official Report*, columns *580-83*, as planning to bring call and recall screening systems into operation by 31 March 1986 failed to do so;

(2) in which health authorities the implementation of call and recall cervical cancer screening has been delayed by concern about the capacity of pathology laboratories to cope with the additional smears or of surgical capacity to deal with cases which need treatment;

(3) on what dates those health authorities listed in his reply of 6 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns *580-83*, as bringing call and recall screening systems into operation by 31 March did so, or plan to do so, respectively;

(4) on what dates he expects each of those health authorities listed on 6 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns *580-83*, as planning to bring call and recall screening systems into operation by 31 March 1988, will actually do so.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities have been asked to arrange with family practitioner committees to implement computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening no later than 31 March 1988. Within this timetable the dates on which individual systems become operational is a matter for local planning.

My right hon. Friend has asked Sir Roy Griffiths, deputy chairman of the National Health Service management board, to lead a small team to oversee the implementation of the Government's policy on cervical and breast cancer screening.

Sir Roy and his team are working with health authorities and family practitioner committees to make sure they have viable plans and that the remaining districts implement those by 31 March 1988. Sir Roy will make regular reports to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional pathology laboratory capacity has been provided to cope with the extra smears resulting from the introduction of call and recall cervical cancer screening.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities have been required to give priority to ensuring that laboratories can meet demand from cervical cancer screening programmes and avoid backlogs. Many districts have been recruiting and training additional laboratory staff. Detailed information on laboratory capacity is not held centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the largest current delay in each health region known to his Department in providing cervical smears through pathology laboratories;

(2) in which health authorities, which have introduced computerised cervical cancer call and recall screening, the increase in the number of women covered is being limited by the need for more computer capacity than was originally provided.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Social Workers

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number of health visitors per 1,000 elderly people in each district health authority in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1987, c. *623*]: The table shows the information requested for England, and for each of the regional health authorities, for the years 1979 to 1985 inclusive. (The September 1985 manpower figures are the latest available to this level of detail). To obtain this information for each district health authority would be disproportionately expensive, and even then, the figures for 1979-81 would not be directly comparable with those for 1982 and later years, due to boundary changes occurring as a result of the 1982 NHS reorganisation.

Health visitors per 1,000 elderly population (aged 65+) [1][2][3]

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	[5]*1984*	*1985*
England[4]	1·3	1·3	1·3	1·3	1·4	1·3	1·4
Northern Regional Health Authority	1·3	1·3	1·4	1·4	1·5	1·4	1·5
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	1·2	1·3	1·3	1·2	1·4	1·3	1·4
Trent Regional Health Authority	1·2	1·1	1·3	1·4	1·4	1·4	1·4

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	[5]1984	1985
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	1·1	1·0	1·1	1·1	1·1	0·9	1·2
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	1·5	1·5	1·5	1·6	1·5	1·4	1·6
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	1·1	1·0	1·2	1·2	1·2	1·0	1·3
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	1·2	1·1	1·1	1·2	1·2	1·1	1·2
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	1·4	1·4	1·3	1·3	1·3	1·3	1·3
Wessex Regional Health Authority	1·2	1·1	1·2	1·2	1·2	1·2	1·3
Oxford Regional Health Authority	1·8	1·8	1·6	1·5	1·7	1·6	1·9
South Western Regional Health Authority	1·1	1·1	1·1	1·1	1·1	1·1	1·2
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	1·4	1·4	1·4	1·5	1·5	1·4	1·5
Mersey Regional Health Authority	1·4	1·4	1·4	1·4	1·4	1·4	1·5
North Western Regional Health Authority	1·5	1·4	1·5	1·5	1·7	1·8	1·9

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.
OPCS Mid-Year Population Estimates.

[1] Manpower figures used are whole-time equivalents as at 30 September. Population figures used are mid-year estimates.

[2] Health Visitor figures include the following grades:—
Health Visitors in the Community and School Health Services, HV Field Work Teachers, TB Visitors with Health Visitor Certificates, Health Visitors engaged on combined duties and Bank Health Visitors. Health Visitor Students are excluded.

[3] Figures not adjusted for the reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 per week).

[4] Includes Special Health Authorities for the London Post-Graduate Teaching Hospitals.

[5] Manpower figures for 1984 were affected by coding problems, and may therefore be undercounted in some areas.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number of community nurses per 1,000 elderly people in each district health authority in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1987 c. *623*]: The table shows the information requested for England, and for each of the regional health authorities, for the years 1979 to 1985 inclusive. (The September 1985 manpower figures are the latest available to this level of detail). To obtain this information for each district health authority would be disproportionately expensive, and even then, the figures for 1979-81 would not be directly comparable with those for 1982 and later years, due to boundary changes occurring as a result of the 1982 NHS reorganisation.

Primary Health Care Nursing Staff per 1,000 Elderly Population[1 2 3] (Aged 65+)

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	[5]1984	1985
England[4]	4·7	4·8	5·1	5·2	5·3	5·3	5·4
Northern Regional Health Authority	5·1	5·1	5·4	5·4	5·5	5·6	5·6
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	4·6	4·7	4·9	5·0	5·1	5·1	5·2
Trent Regional Health Authority	4·6	4·7	5·0	5·1	5·1	5·3	5·4
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	3·6	3·7	4·0	4·1	4·1	4·2	4·3
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	5·2	5·3	5·4	5·9	5·7	6·0	6·3
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	4·6	4·1	4·9	5·2	5·3	5·2	5·4
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	4·6	4·6	4·9	5·2	5·2	5·0	5·0
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	4·6	4·8	5·0	4·8	5·0	4·9	5·1
Wessex Regional Health Authority	3·8	3·6	4·1	4·2	4·3	4·4	4·4
Oxford Regional Health Authority	5·9	6·2	6·5	6·3	6·5	6·4	6·4
South Western Regional Health Authority	3·7	4·0	4·3	4·3	4·3	4·4	4·4
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	5·1	5·2	5·7	5·7	5·7	5·7	5·8
Mersey Regional Health Authority	5·3	5·4	5·6	5·7	5·7	5·8	5·8
North Western Regional Health Authority	5·7	5·7	5·9	6·1	6·5	6·7	6·7

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.
OPCS Mid-Year Population Estimates.

[1] Manpower figures used are whole-time equivalents as at 30 September.
Population figures used are mid-year estimates.

[2] Includes *all* nursing staff in the Primary Health Care field (mainly in the District Nursing and Health Visiting areas of work).

[3] Figures not adjusted for the reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

[4] Includes Special Health Authorities for the London Post-Graduate Teaching Hospitals.

[5] Some manpower figures for 1984 were affected by coding problems, and may therefore be undercounted in some areas.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give by health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority the number of beds in 1978 and 1987;

(2) if he will list the number of patients given treatment, annually since 1978 in each health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *102*]: I am sorry that I cannot give my hon. Friend all the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The latest information centrally available is given in the tables. For more recent information my hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Average daily available beds in national health service hospitals in West Midlands regional health authority

District health authorities	*1978*	*1985*
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,222·3	916·5
Herefordshire	1,198·3	976·0

District health authorities	1978	1985
Kidderminster and District	1,373·7	1,077·9
Worcester and District	1,682·7	1,460·7
Shropshire	2,632·0	2,448·4
Mid Staffordshire	1,399·4	1,301·0
North Staffordshire	3,622·2	3,335·8
South East Staffordshire	1,527·3	1,451·1
Rugby	320·5	326·2
North Warwickshire[1]	—	1,136·1
South Warwickshire[1]	—	1,755·1
Central Birmingham[1]	—	1,776·4
East Birmingham	998·1	960·5
North Birmingham	1,877·1	1,493·2
South Birmingham[1]	—	2,262·1
West Birmingham[1]	—	2,037·6
Coventry	1,935·9	1,885·9
Dudley	1,446·8	1,524·7
Sandwell	725·6	882·1
Solihull[1]	—	1,048·2
Walsall	1,864·3	1,567·5
Wolverhampton	1,543·4	1,485·0

[1] Comparable figures for 1978 not readily available because of national health service restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Discharges from and deaths in NHS hospitals during the year in West Midlands RHA

District Health Authority	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Bromsgrove and Redditch	13,727	14,168	15,064	14,633	14,998	14,888	14,777	15,329
Herefordshire	16,149	16,779	17,289	17,332	17,175	18,378	18,893	19,454
Kidderminster and District	10,027	10,965	11,460	11,631	10,619	10,980	11,893	12,788
Worcester and District	22,289	24,304	24,967	24,586	24,826	25,729	26,854	27,950
Shropshire	39,929	40,679	42,357	43,649	44,376	47,188	49,544	51,690
Mid Staffordshire	17,029	16,784	17,691	18,404	19,398	21,521	24,197	26,141
North Staffordshire	49,863	48,195	53,210	52,164	51,911	55,699	58,673	59,280
South East Staffordshire	15,469	16,395	17,420	17,654	18,217	18,000	18,805	20,656
Rugby	7,658	7,812	7,955	8,136	8,440	8,982	9,244	9,571
North Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	16,382	16,785	17,758	17,982
South Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	20,989	21,648	22,484	22,693
Central Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	48,893	55,430	55,139	53,828
East Birmingham	21,846	22,110	22,897	23,035	23,770	25,387	26,417	27,908
North Birmingham	24,294	23,395	22,657	24,283	24,597	24,517	25,236	26,711
South Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	35,406	36,471	38,210	38,845
West Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	35,040	34,973	36,419	36,818
Coventry	42,928	41,726	45,365	46,062	44,898	46,966	48,461	49,405
Dudley	26,120	26,362	28,180	29,697	31,891	32,453	33,054	37,144
Sandwell	13,256	13,812	15,955	17,234	19,545	21,200	21,872	23,310
Solihull[1]	—	—	—	—	16,899	18,324	19,293	20,699
Walsall	18,455	19,008	19,726	20,996	22,278	23,386	25,434	25,678
Wolverhampton	36,670	37,736	37,886	39,030	40,513	40,838	41,545	42,337

Day case attendances in NHS hospitals in West Midlands RHA

District Health Authority	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Bromsgrove and Redditch	986	1,208	1,386	1,525	1,592	1,601	1,668	1,537
Herefordshire	2,148	2,209	2,336	2,190	2,004	2,994	3,296	3,571
Kidderminster and District	2,434	2,254	2,492	2,197	3,168	3,214	3,790	3,901
Worcester and District	1,438	2,256	2,621	2,801	2,716	2,955	2,583	2,403
Shropshire	1,329	1,315	1,432	1,565	1,410	1,670	1,832	2,184
Mid Staffordshire	1,455	1,375	1,957	1,951	1,988	2,173	2,148	2,027
North Staffordshire	6,068	5,252	6,200	6,210	5,578	5,910	5,556	5,938
South East Staffordshire	2,542	2,916	3,062	3,230	3,376	3,481	3,914	4,243
Rugby	407	426	477	581	635	749	827	964
North Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	1,448	1,713	1,946	1,960
South Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	3,325	4,079	4,909	4,450
Central Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	4,453	5,341	5,266	3,925
East Birmingham	1,849	1,703	2,139	2,306	2,068	2,058	2,489	2,670
North Birmingham	1,703	1,675	1,862	2,258	2,499	2,680	3,701	2,947
South Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	4,336	4,751	5,204	5,575
West Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	4,123	4,333	4,498	5,208
Coventry	3,798	4,010	4,710	4,941	4,057	5,331	6,191	6,664
Dudley	6,555	5,969	7,184	7,368	7,892	8,769	8,753	10,399
Sandwell	1,087	982	1,181	2,017	2,995	3,799	4,201	4,731
Solihull[1]	—	—	—	—	568	846	1,017	698
Walsall	1,133	1,433	1,918	2,172	1,912	2,491	2,554	2,981
Wolverhampton	2,205	2,267	2,848	2,919	2,830	3,277	3,754	4,275

New out-patients during the year in NHS hospitals in West Midlands RHA

District Health Authority	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Bromsgrove and Redditch	13,183	13,434	14,724	14,902	15,673	15,965	16,555	18,304
Herefordshire	17,620	17,566	18,330	17,645	17,482	18,658	19,759	20,461
Kidderminster and District	13,382	13,571	13 554	13,823	14,353	14,883	14,931	15,741
Worcester and District	28,421	29,263	29,692	30,726	30,700	32,421	33,924	32,623
Shropshire	49,393	49,648	53,683	57,070	58,102	57,948	62,245	61,056
Mid Staffordshire	22,676	23,689	24,494	24,407	24,009	22,163	22,572	24,461

District Health Authority	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North Staffordshire	68,061	72,728	74,938	76,440	75,636	86,369	89,200	88,282
South East Staffordshire	23,412	25,230	23,266	24,980	25,102	27,330	26,657	26,903
Rugby	11,501	11,922	11,904	11,629	12,136	12,774	12,732	13,172
North Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	19,615	19,813	20,109	20,497
South Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	27,982	28,683	29,746	30,907
Central Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	97,767	96,930	98,542	95,535
East Birmingham	19,935	20,952	21,102	21,017	21,513	21,190	21,975	23,024
North Birmingham	34,211	34,456	32,668	31,911	33,101	34,176	34,228	37,859
South Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	42,499	43,196	42,641	43,817
West Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	48,657	49,539	48,849	49,465
Coventry	51,314	52,838	54,576	54,369	51,688	52,454	54,445	57,643
Dudley	33,066	32,756	34,171	35,065	35,909	38,795	40,233	42,287
Sandwell	20,606	21,065	21,599	22,023	24,138	27,105	28,882	29,054
Solihull[1]	—	—	—	—	17,690	18,276	18,985	20,785
Walsall	23,301	25,620	25,610	27,461	26,254	27,960	31,893	32,597
Wolverhampton	35,674	40,838	40,996	41,236	43,423	44,472	47,473	48,060

Total out-patient attendances during the year in NHS hospitals in West Midlands RHA

District Health Authority	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Bromsgrove and Redditch	57,125	58,431	61,967	63,475	69,424	72,515	78,240	84,740
Herefordshire	74,782	75,865	80,654	79,395	77,562	82,804	86,441	85,748
Kidderminster and District	54,201	52,565	55,075	55,257	56,553	59,753	61,670	63,640
Worcester and District	103,073	106,542	107,661	109,925	111,526	114,062	118,426	121,917
Shropshire	207,991	201,342	213,912	214,164	220,421	215,280	217,023	221,987
Mid Staffordshire	93,289	97,550	105,100	107,952	110,308	104,076	101,171	106,809
North Staffordshire	304,688	306,557	322,595	328,251	323,417	349,595	350,665	348,754
South East Staffordshire	86,161	92,999	93,287	101,920	105,911	110,314	110,211	112,325
Rugby	47,892	49,745	50,271	48,438	49,722	52,842	54,087	56,743
North Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	83,294	87,852	89,499	92,569
South Warwickshire[1]	—	—	—	—	104,188	107,304	112,219	114,273
Central Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	518,022	518,913	528,011	516,209
East Birmingham	110,571	112,187	116,807	120,359	120,204	121,536	127,238	134,335
North Birmingham	159,390	161,679	165,711	161,571	160,484	157,872	156,757	158,756
South Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	196,847	198,884	200,844	204,415
West Birmingham[1]	—	—	—	—	232,301	255,123	258,910	250,709
Coventry	239,975	241,076	250,597	244,199	234,540	242,457	246,181	250,532
Dudley	162,274	162,850	176,907	182,907	184,062	197,329	194,202	203,439
Sandwell	81,755	82,560	85,403	92,140	106,397	120,998	128,601	134,415
Solihull[1]	—	—	—	—	83,630	86,260	86,645	88,235
Walsall	97,625	96,744	102,608	108,770	110,932	116,946	124,601	133,054
Wolverhampton	231,552	232,096	242,295	240,103	242,789	244,348	240,687	239,152

[1] Comparable figures for 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981 not readily available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Fowler [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987, c. *408*]: The financial management initiative embraces a whole range of improvements to management in central Government to reflect our commitment to value for money in public expenditure. Since the launch of the initiative in 1982 my Department has made considerable progress in this field. Management accounts and a new staff appraisal system have been introduced, both of which emphasise the importance of accountability and arrangements to set and monitor objectives and targets. A system of delegated budgetary control has been introduced, giving line managers throughout the Department responsibility for their own running costs and promoting greater cost consciousness at all levels.

We have completed a series of wide-ranging reviews of the social security system and, in the Health Service, the financial management initiative has been reflected in the appointment of general managers at regional, district and unit level.

Chapter 3.14 and 3.15 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56) gives examples of output and performance measures over the Department's businesses. These improvements have provided a valuable impetus and build on work which was already under way in the Department to develop financial management. The principles of the initiative form an integral part of our developing management systems and improvements in value for money generally. Its effects are thus increasingly difficult to identify separately.

Health Expenditure (London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), 2 April, *Official Report*, column 1221, he will tabulate in the *Official Report*, for each of the London region health authorities and health districts, respectively, the expenditure of each in real terms in 1979 and in 1986, showing the percentage increase or decrease stating or using the same statistical criteria.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987, c. *412*]: The table shows gross revenue expenditure of the Thames regional health authorities, London area and district health authorities and boards of governors and special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals in 1978-79 and 1985-86 at 1985-86 price

levels as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, and, where appropriate, the percentage growth in real terms over the period. Comparisons between individual authorities across the period are invalidated by the effects of the boundary changes following the reorganisation of the National Health Service in 1982.

The percentage real terms increase on all health services, that is hospital and community health services' revenue expenditure and expenditure on the family practitioner services, in Greater London between 1978-79 and 1985-86 was 10·6 per cent.

Area Health Authority	*Gross revenue expenditure 1978-79 £000 1985-86 prices*	*District Health Authorities*	*Gross revenue expenditure 1985-86 £000*	[1] *Percentage real terms growth in gross revenue expenditure 1978-79 to 1985-86*
Barnet	63,647	Barnet	65,574	—
Brent and Harrow	81,949	Harrow	36,573	—
		Brent	50,553	—
Ealing Hammersmith and Hounslow	143,929	Hounslow and Spelthorne	51,572	—
		Ealing	40,265	—
Hillingdon	49,419	Hillingdon	54,951	—
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	169,778	Paddington	63,073	—
		Riverside	128,455	—
Barking and Havering	63,137	Barking/Havering/Brentwood	72,033	—
Camden and Islington	156,798	Hampstead	35,633	—
		Bloomsbury	122,451	—
		Islington	49,194	—
City and East London	174,264	City and Hackney	81,517	—
		Newham	41,765	—
		Tower Hamlets	67,183	—
Enfield and Haringey	71,788	Enfield	38,144	—
		Haringey	46,313	—
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	89,526	Redbridge	37,799	—
		Waltham Forest	52,726	—
Greenwich and Bexley	94,870	Bexley	35,608	—
		Greenwich	61,135	—
Bromley	51,192	Bromley	51,135	—
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	237,286	West Lambeth	78,949	—
		Camberwell	65,562	—
		Lewisham and North Southwark	109,019	—
Croydon	53,072	Croydon	58,042	—
Kingston and Richmond	46,044	Kingston and Esher	40,133	—
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	172,326	Richmond/Twickenham/Roehampton	34,799	—
		Wandsworth	88,156	—
		Sutton and Merton	66,913	—

[1] Not available as figures distorted by boundary changes

Boards of Governors for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals	*Gross revenue expenditure for 1978-79 1985-86 prices £000*	*Special health authorities for London postgraduate teaching hospitals*	*Gross revenue expenditure for 1985-86 £000*	[1] *Percentage real-terms growth in the gross revenue expenditure 1978-79 to 1985-86*
Hospitals for sick Children	26,335	Hospitals for sick children	30,319	—
National Hospitals for nervous Diseases	16,174	National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	17,024	—
Royal National Throat Nose and Ear Hospitals	7,332	—	—	—
Moorfields Eye Hospital	12,041	Moorfields Eye Hospital	12,640	—
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	14,090	Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	17,773	—
St. John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin	2,827	—	—	—
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	24,466	National Heart and Chest Hospitals	28,798	—
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital	11,128	—	—	—
St. Peter's Hospitals	6,708	—	—	—
Royal Marsden Hospital	18,285	Royal Marsden Hospital	21,514	—
Queen Charlotte's Hospital for Women	9,299	Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	41,921	—
Eastman Dental Hospital	3,660	Eastman Dental Hospital	4,804	—
Greater London Total	1,871,372	Greater London Total	2,020,020	7·9

[1] Not available as figures distorted by boundary changes

Regional Health Authorities	Gross revenue expenditure 1978-79 1985-86 prices £000	Regional Health Authorities	Gross revenue expenditure 1985-86	Percentage real terms growth in gross revenue expenditure 1978-79 to 1985-86
North West Thames	718,105	North West Thames	728,848	—
North East Thames	780,583	North East Thames	914,188	—
South East Thames	748,094	South East Thames	907,525	—
South West Thames	572,912	South West Thames	608,276	—
Total Thames Regions and Boards of Governors Special Health Authorities	2,972,440	Total Thames Regions and Special Health Authorities	3,233,629	9 [1]

[1] Figures distorted by 1982 boundary changes

Notes:

(1) The figures are derived from health authorities summarised income and expenditure accounts.

(2) The 1982 reorganisation of the National Health Service resulted in substantial and complex boundary changes and changes in management responsibility, and it is therefore not possible to make direct comparisons between the pre- and post-1982 authorities. In addition to these changes there was a major restructuring of the boards of governors for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals as follows:

(a) Bloomsbury health authority now manages the Royal national throat nose and ear hospitals, the Royal national orthopaedic hospitals and St. Peter's hospitals.

(b) West Lambeth health authority now manages St. John's hospital for diseases of the skin.

(c) Hammersmith hospital was given special health authority status.

Sick Pay

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the statutory sick pay of a person currently earning £75 per week who is in receipt of statutory sick pay for the first time this week; what would have been his statutory sick pay had such a person been taken sick in March 1987 or been eligible for statutory sick pay that month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1987 c. *225*]: In March, someone normally earning £75 a week would be entitled to statutory sick pay at a weekly rate of £46·75. Because of the simplification of the SSP scheme, reducing three rates to two, the same weekly earnings since 6 April attract weekly SSP of £32·85.

But it does not follow from this that the employee will find his income during sickness has reduced. The SSP scheme provides for a statutory minimum amount to be paid by employers to their employees when sick. There is nothing to prevent employers from paying more than the amounts laid down—and indeed many already do so under their own occupational sick pay schemes. Over 80per cent. of full-time employees are covered by such schemes.

Secure Units

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the role proposed for non-regional secure unit facilities in the psychiatric assessment of offenders, referred to in the Government response to recommendation 25 of the third report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86, indicating which other facilities it is intended to utilise.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 1 May 1987, c. *264*]: The psychiatric assessment of offenders can be carried out, according to the needs of the individual, within a range of facilities which will include the regional secure units, and other National Health Service hospitals and units offering security appropriate to the individual. These will include facilities which are being developed in some regions as a supplement to permanent RSUs, described as "close supervision" or "intensive care" units which can offer psychiatric care under secure conditions.

The Department has stressed the need for the NHS to provide a comprehensive range of facilities for patients needing varying degrees of security. I am arranging to place in the Library a copy of a letter sent to regional chairmen last autumn which emphasised this requirement; it includes a table showing that the NHS had nearly 1,800 beds offering degrees of security.

Liverpool Women's Hospital (Cervical Cancer Tests)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why 45,000 records of women tested at Liverpool women's hospital for cervical cancer have been re-examined; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 1 May 1987, c. *264*]: A review of 45,000 records of cervical smear tests, carried out during the period March 1983 to December 1985 at the women's hospital, Liverpool, was undertaken after the Liverpool health authority was advised that tests reported as negative at the time might have been sufficiently doubtful to have justified a repeat examination or follow-up.

As a result of the review 487 women were identified as requiring further investigation or treatment and 429 have already been contacted. Efforts are continuing to trace the remaining 58. Arrangements set up by Liverpool health authority for special clinics, including evening and weekend sessions, have enabled the 429 to be seen as quickly as possible. Some of these women have received or will require some form of treatment, mostly on an out-patient basis. The health authority is satisfied that the situation is confined to the period and hospital mentioned.

A thorough review is being conducted by a team chaired by Mr. J. B. Fitzpatrick CBE, chairman of the authority, and which includes a consultant pathologist from outside the Mersey region nominated by the Royal College of Pathologists.

We are keeping a close watch on the situation and await the results of the health authority's review before considering whether any departmental action is required.

1991 CENSUS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any decision has been taken on the inclusion of a religious question in the 1991 census; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 1 May 1987, c. *264*]: No decisions have been taken about the content of a 1991 census. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, the General Register Office for Scotland and the census office in Northern Ireland, which carries out its own census under separate legislation, have been consulting users of census statistics about possible questions for inclusion. The consultations are planned to continue throughout 1987 and all requests will be carefully considered.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Integrated Education

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on integrated education in Northern Ireland; and if he will outline the criteria used for allocating funds to integrated schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is Government policy that integrated education should be encouraged in Northern Ireland wherever there is sufficient local demand for it. Independent integrated schools seeking recognition as grant-aided maintained schools must prove over a period that they are able to attract enough pupils to make them potentially viable. When they are recognised as maintained schools they are funded in the same way as other maintained schools, ie

a. the Department of Education pays the salaries of the teachers;
b. the appropriate education and library board meets the running costs;
c. the Department of Education pays 85 per cent. grant on approved capital expenditure.

Marches and Funerals (Policing)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the policing of marches and funerals in the Province.

Mr. Scott: The control of public processions and similar events is the responsibility of the police who have a duty to ensure that the law is not broken or, if it is, that those responsible are dealt with in an appropriate manner. Sensitive operational judgments have frequently to be made and these depend on the circumstances of each case.

Forestry

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, under the new EEC regulation aimed at establishing uniform forest health surveys, he has assessed the number of sampling points that would need to be looked at under the agreed grid system; and if Northern Ireland will be included in the Government's 1987 tree health survey.

Mr. Viggers: The Department of Agriculture has assessed that the number of sampling points needed for the European Community survey will be approximately 52. Northern Ireland will take part in the EC survey but has not been included in the Forestry Commission 1987 tree health survey.

Police Complaints Board

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current composition of the Police Complaints Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The current membership of the Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland comprises a chairman; deputy chairman; and six other members.

The Draft Police (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 was laid before Parliament on 16 December 1986 and is due to be debated in the House on 6 May. This provides, subject to parliamentary approval, for the abolition of the board and its replacement by the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland.

The proposed membership of the new commission is a chairman; two deputy chairmen; and not less than four other members.

Northern Ireland Airports Ltd.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the members of Northern Ireland Airports Ltd., and the remaining periods for which each member has been appointed; whether members are required to declare any interests in firms appointed by the authority; and whether his approval was sought for the major changes in management at Aldergrove airport announced last week.

Mr. Needham: The information requested regarding the membership of the board of Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. is provided below. There is a requirement for members of the board to disclose their relevant commercial interests. Matters related to the management staff of the company are the responsibility of the board.

Name of director	*Date of expiry of appointment*
The Hon. H. O'Neill (Chairman)	30 June 1989
Mr. R. L. Schierbeck	30 June 1987
Mr. T. G. McLaughlin	30 April 1988
Mrs. E. I. Johnston	30 June 1988
Mr. C. H. Martin	30 June 1988
Mr. J. R. Gorman	31 July 1988
Mr. J. Blair	31 October 1988

Terrorism

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *580*, how many of the recent murders considered to have been carried out by competing factions of the Irish National Liberation Army led to the deaths of individuals who had formerly been charged with scheduled offences but subsequently released.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the total cost of resisting the terrorist campaign since 1969.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Friends as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons convicted

of terrorist offences are currently in prison in the Province; how many are men and how many women; and what is the average length of sentence served in prison for such crimes.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1987, c. 254]: On 12 April 1987 there were 1,157 sentenced prisoners in Northern Ireland who had been convicted of a scheduled offence, including 448 prisoners who were serving life imprisonment or detention during the Secretary of State's pleasure; 1,143 were men and 14 were women. Because of the very high proportion of those serving indeterminate sentences a meaningful figure on the average length of sentence served in prison is not available.

SCOTLAND

Stirling

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the total amount spent or committed by his Department on capital projects and grants in the Stirling constituency since 1983; and if he will list the principal projects involved.

Mr. Ancram: Records relating to public expenditure are not generally maintained on a constituency basis.

Milk Quota

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the transfer of milk quota from Scotland to other parts of the United Kingdom; and what effect this will have on the dairy production and processing industries in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Environmental Assessment

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new legislative provisions he anticipates will be required to supplement the existing town and country planning legislation in order fully to implement the European Directive on environmental assessment.

Mr. Ancram: Details of proposed statutory provisions for implementing the directive were set out in an appendix to the consultative paper on implementation of the directive which was issued by the Scottish Development Department in April 1986. Copies of that paper are available in the Library. Responses are being considered.

Killearn Hospital

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the Killearn hospital site.

Mr. John MacKay: Missives for the sale of the site were concluded in July 1985. An application by the purchasers for a change of use to an equestrian centre with associated facilities was approved by Stirling district council in October 1985 subject to various conditions and the requirement that an agreement under section 50 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 be successfully negotiated between the local authority and the developer prior to planning consent being issued. These negotiations are not yet complete and accordingly the sale has not yet been concluded.

Bridge of Allan (Flooding)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Central regional council regarding flooding in Bridge of Allan.

Mr. Ancram: No representations as such have been received from Central regional council, but the council did inquire in April 1986 about the availability of grant for a flood prevention scheme at Bridge of Allan in varying circumstances of cost allocation among interested parties.

Forth Valley Health Board

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column 73, relating to consultation procedures carried out by the Forth Valley health board, how many neighbours were consulted by Forth Valley health board; why the chairman refused to meet residents when requested to do so by the hon. Member for Stirling; why the board refused to attend public meetings and a community council meeting; if he is satisfied with the procedures followed by Forth Valley health board in this matter; and if he will now issue guidelines on consultation.

Mr. John Mackay: My right hon. and learned Friend understands that Forth Valley health board took certain steps regarding consultation with local residents on its proposal for 11 Randolph road, Stirling. On the question of guidelines, I have nothing to add to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend on 11 March 1987 at column *243*. The matters on which my hon. Friend seeks detailed information are entirely for the health board and are best pursued direct.

AIDS

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, column 567, whether the restrictions on blood donations are to apply to all who have visited certain parts of Africa or only to those who have had sexual intercourse with persons living in those countries, as stated in his Department's press release entitled "People who must not give blood", issued on 29 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The long-standing practice (designed to reduce the risk of transmitting certain tropical diseases) is to ask all potential donors who have lived in or visited certain parts of Africa not to donate blood until 12 months after their return to the United Kingdom.

The restrictions introduced in August 1984 (which, as announced on 28 April, are now to be slightly amended to discourage donations from prostitutes and people with AIDS or the AIDS antibody) apply to potential donors who, in addition, have had sexual relations with men or women living in those parts.

Diabetics

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects free disposable syringes and needles for diabetics to be available on prescription.

Mr. John MacKay: Free disposable syringes and needles will be available for diabetics on GP prescription as soon as negotiations with manufacturers on specification, supply and price have been completed.

Marine Farming (Pollution)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what research he is sponsoring into the incidence of pollution from marine farming.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fisheries Protection

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the registration index of the Fokker F27 that he is acquiring for fishery surveillance; what will be the cost of changing the registration index; and what the new index will be;

(2) if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 27 March, *Official Report*, column 300, regarding the Fokker F27-200 to be used for fishery surveillance patrols, he will list the owners of the aircraft since 1959 and the type and location of services for which it was used during that period; what is the estimated remaining life of the aircraft in terms of flying hours in Scottish fishery patrol conditions; what is the anticipated average number of hours per cycle in this service; and to what extent the manufacturer of the aircraft is directly involved in its current overhaul.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the percentage unemployment in the Stirling constituency for each month since January 1983.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available for parliamentary constituencies. However, unemployment percentage rates for the Stirling travel-to-work area from January 1983 to March 1987 (the latest date for which information is available) were as shown in the table below.

Unemployment Rates—Stirling Travel-to-Work Area

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
January	14·1	14·1	14·2	14·9	14·2
February	13·8	14·0	14·1	14·6	14·1
March	13·5	13·5	13·9	14·1	13·5
April	13·3	13·0	13·8	13·9	—
May	12·9	12·6	13·9	13·6	—
June	12·3	12·7	13·7	13·6	—
July	12·7	12·7	13·8	13·5	—
August	12·7	12·8	13·7	13·3	—
September	13·5	14·3	14·0	13·3	—
October	13·5	14·0	13·7	13·2	—
November	13·4	14·0	14·0	13·7	—
December	13·4	13·8	14·0	13·6	—

Due to various changes in the compilation of the statistics during the period these figures are not directly comparable.

This information is available in the Library.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many jobs have been created and how many lost in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency in each year since June 1979 in the food processing industry;

(2) how many jobs have been created and how many lost in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency in each year since June 1979 in the clothing and textile industry;

(3) how many jobs have been created and how many lost in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency in each year since June 1979 in the computer construction industry;

(4) how many jobs have been created and how many lost in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency in each year since June 1979 in the construction industry;

(5) how many jobs have been created and how many lost in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency in each year since June 1979 in the distribution industry;

(6) how many jobs have been created and how many lost in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency in each year since June 1979 in the engineering industry;

(7) how many jobs have been created and how many lost in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency in each year since June 1979.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many qualified teachers are presently unemployed in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Information about numbers of unemployed teachers is not available.

Rates

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has as to how the current produce of domestic rates in Scotland and in each of the regions of Scotland might be raised through community charge or local income tax with and without resource equalisation in the cases of *(a)* a single person on (i) 100 per cent., (ii) 90 per cent., (iii) 75 per cent. and (iv) 60 per cent. of the average male manual worker's wage for Scotland, *(b)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)* above, whose wife earns 50 per cent. of the average for women in full-time employment, *(c)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)* above, whose wife earns 50 per cent. of the average for women in part-time employment and *(d)* a married man as in *(c)* above, living with three sons or daughters aged 18 to 24 years all of whom earn the average for full-time workers in the 18 to 24 age group.

Mr. Ancram: The estimated average local tax bills under the community charge system and under a local income tax system with and without resource equalisation needed to replace domestic rates in 1985-86, are given below for the specific cases requested.

Area	Community charge	Equalised Local Income Tax				Unequalised Local Income Tax			
		100 per cent.	90 per cent.	75 per cent.	60 per cent.	100 per cent.	90 per cent.	75 per cent.	60 per cent.
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
(a) A single person earning 100 per cent., 90 per cent., 75 per cent., 60 per cent. of average manual earnings									
Borders	158	272	238	181	125	196	170	130	90
Central	187	323	282	214	149	405	351	269	187
Dumfries and Galloway	155	266	234	176	123	247	214	164	114
Fife	210	367	317	244	169	272	236	181	125
Grampian	157	272	237	181	125	196	170	130	90
Highland	153	266	231	176	123	203	175	134	93
Lothian	225	393	339	260	181	475	411	315	219
Strathclyde	229	399	345	265	184	418	362	277	193
Tayside	194	336	292	223	155	412	356	273	190
Scotland	207	361	312	239	166	355	307	235	163
(b) A married man with earnings as in *(a)* above, whose wife earns 50 per cent. of the average for woman in full-time employment									
Borders	316	257	223	165	110	186	159	119	80
Central	374	304	264	195	130	382	328	246	164
Dumfries and Galloway	310	250	219	161	107	233	200	140	100
Fife	420	347	296	223	149	257	220	165	110
Grampian	314	257	221	165	110	186	159	119	80
Highland	306	250	216	161	107	192	164	123	82
Lothian	450	370	317	238	158	448	384	288	192
Strathclyde	458	376	323	242	161	394	338	254	169
Tayside	388	316	274	203	135	388	333	250	166
Scotland	414	341	292	219	146	335	287	215	143
(c) A married man as in *(a)* above whose wife earns 50 per cent. of the average for women in part-time employment									
Borders	316	219	184	127	72	158	131	91	52
Central	374	259	218	150	85	325	271	189	107
Dumfries and Galloway	310	213	180	124	70	198	165	115	65
Fife	420	295	244	171	97	219	182	127	72
Grampian	314	219	183	127	72	158	131	91	52
Highland	306	213	178	124	70	163	135	94	53
Lothian	450	315	262	183	103	381	317	221	125
Strathclyde	458	320	267	186	105	335	279	195	110
Tayside	388	269	226	156	88	330	275	192	108
Scotland	414	290	241	168	95	285	237	165	93
(d) A married man as in *(c)* above living with three sons or daughters aged 18-24 years all of whom earn the average for full-time workers in the 18-24 years age group									
Borders	790	714	685	622	567	515	488	448	409
Central	935	847	822	738	673	1,063	1,008	927	845
Dumfries and Galloway	775	696	672	607	553	648	614	565	515
Fife	1,050	964	911	840	766	714	677	622	567
Grampian	785	714	681	622	567	515	488	448	409
Highland	765	696	664	607	553	532	504	463	422
Lothian	1,125	1,029	476	897	817	1,245	1,181	1,085	989
Strathclyde	1,145	1,036	993	912	931	1,097	1,040	957	872
Tayside	970	881	842	768	700	1,080	1,020	942	858
Scotland	1,035	947	898	825	752	930	882	810	738

Notes:

(1) The average community charges for 1985-86 used in the tables were published in the *Official Report* on 20 February 1986.

(2) The underlying local income tax rates (with resource equalisation) have been estimated on the assumption that some form of resource equalisation would make the yield of 1p in the £ the same per adult in all areas.

(3) Published information on taxable resources in local authority areas is only available up to 1982-83. The sample size is small and the regional pattern shows considerable variation from year to year. Estimates of local income tax rates without resource equalisation are therefore subject to some uncertainty. Those in the table have been produced by applying the pattern of unequalised tax rates calculated for 1982-83 to 1985-86 average earnings.

(4) Estimates of average gross earnings have been taken from the 1985 new earnings survey. The average figures for Scotland have been used in each case with the exception of average earnings for the 18-24 year age group, where only GB figures were readily available.

(5) In applying local income tax rates to cases *(a)* to *(d)* it is assumed that earnings are the only sources of income and that only personal tax allowances apply.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has as to how the current produce of domestic rates in Scotland and in each of the regions in Scotland might be raised through community charge or local income tax with and without resource equalisation in the cases of *(a)* a single person on (i) 100 per cent., (ii) 90 per cent., (iii) 75 per cent., and (iv) 60 per cent. of an annual male manual worker's wage in Scotland, *(b)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)* above, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment, *(c)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)* above, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in part-time employment, *(d)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)* above, whose wife has no income, *(e)* a married couple with earnings as in *(b)* above, living with a son or daughter aged 18 or over whose earnings are the average for full-time workers in the 18 to 24 years age group, *(f)* a married couple with earnings as in *(b)* above, living with

a son or daughter aged 18 to 24 years who is unemployed, *(g)* a single person on 100 per cent. of an average male non-manual worker's wage and *(h)* a married man with earnings as in *(g)* above, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment.

Mr. Ancram: The estimated average local tax bills under the community charge system and under a local income tax system with and without resource equalisation needed to replace domestic rates in 1985-86, are given below for the specific cases requested.

Area	*Community Charge*	*Equalised Local Income Tax*				*Unequalised Local Income Tax*			
		100 per cent.	*90 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*	*60 per cent.*	*100 per cent.*	*90 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*	*60 per cent.*
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
(a) A single person earning 100 per cent., 90 per cent., 75 per cent., 60 per cent. of average manual earnings									
Borders	158	272	238	181	125	196	170	130	90
Central	187	323	282	214	149	405	351	269	187
Dumfries and Galloway	155	266	234	176	123	247	214	164	114
Fife	210	367	317	244	169	272	236	181	125
Grampian	157	272	237	181	125	196	170	130	90
Highland	153	266	231	176	123	203	175	134	93
Lothian	225	393	239	260	181	475	411	315	219
Strathclyde	229	399	345	265	184	418	362	277	193
Tayside	194	336	292	223	155	412	356	273	190
Scotland	207	361	312	239	166	355	307	235	163
(b) A married man with earnings as in (a) above, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment									
Borders	316	390	357	298	243	282	255	215	176
Central	374	462	423	353	288	580	526	444	362
Dumfries and Galloway	310	380	350	291	237	354	320	271	221
Fife	420	526	475	402	328	390	353	298	243
Grampian	314	390	355	298	243	282	255	215	176
Highland	306	380	346	291	237	291	263	222	181
Lothian	450	563	509	430	350	680	616	520	424
Strathclyde	458	571	578	437	356	598	542	458	373
Tayside	388	480	439	367	299	593	536	455	371
Scotland	414	517	468	395	322	508	460	388	316
(c) A married man with earnings as in (a), whose wife's earnings are the average for women in part-time employment									
Borders	316	239	204	147	92	182	146	105	66
Central	374	283	241	174	109	355	301	219	137
Dumfries and Galloway	310	232	200	143	89	216	183	133	83
Fife	470	222	271	298	124	239	202	147	92
Grampian	314	239	203	147	92	182	146	105	66
Highland	306	233	197	144	90	178	150	109	88
Lothian	450	344	290	212	132	416	352	256	160
Strathclyde	458	259	295	215	134	366	310	226	141
Tayside	388	294	250	181	113	360	305	222	138
Scotland	414	316	267	194	121	311	263	191	119
(d) A married man with earnings as in (a) above, whose wife has no income									
Borders	316	219	184	127	72	158	131	91	52
Central	374	259	218	150	85	375	271	189	107
Dumfries and Galloway	310	213	180	124	70	198	165	115	65
Fife	420	295	244	171	97	219	182	127	72
Grampian	314	219	183	127	72	158	131	91	52
Highland	306	213	178	124	70	163	135	94	53
Lothian	450	315	262	183	103	381	317	221	125
Strathclyde	458	320	267	186	105	335	279	195	110
Tayside	388	269	226	156	88	330	275	192	108
Scotland	414	290	241	168	95	285	237	165	93
(e) A married couple with earnings as in (b), living with a son or daughter aged 18 or over whose earnings are the average for full-time workers in the 18-24 years age group									
Borders	474	555	527	463	408	401	374	334	295
Central	561	658	621	549	484	826	771	690	608
Dumfries and Galloway	465	541	514	452	398	504	470	421	371
Fife	630	749	697	625	551	555	518	463	408
Grampian	471	555	521	463	408	401	374	234	295
Highland	459	541	508	452	398	414	386	345	304
Lothian	675	801	747	668	588	968	904	808	712
Strathclyde	687	813	760	679	598	852	796	712	627
Tayside	582	684	644	569	501	843	783	705	621
Scotland	621	736	687	614	541	723	675	603	531
(f) A married couple with earnings as in (b) above, living with a son or daughter aged 18 to 24 years who is unemployed									
Borders	429	390	357	298	243	282	255	215	176
Central	488	462	423	353	288	580	526	444	362
Dumfries and Galloway	422	380	350	291	237	354	320	271	221

Area	Community Charge	Equalised Local Income Tax				Unequalised Local Income Tax			
		100 per cent.	90 per cent.	75 per cent.	60 per cent.	100 per cent.	90 per cent.	75 per cent.	60 per cent.
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fife	543	526	475	402	328	390	353	298	243
Grampian	430	390	355	298	243	282	255	215	176
Highland	419	380	346	291	237	291	263	222	181
Lothian	574	563	509	430	350	680	616	520	424
Strathclyde	584	571	578	437	356	598	542	458	373
Tayside	507	480	439	367	299	593	534	455	371
Scotland	536	517	468	395	322	508	460	388	316

	Community Charge	Equalised Local Income Tax	Unequalised Local Income Tax
		100 per cent.	100 per cent.
(g) A single person on 100 per cent. of an average male non-manual worker's wage			
Borders	158	406	293
Central	187	482	604
Dumfries and Galloway	155	397	368
Fife	210	548	406
Grampian	157	406	293
Highland	153	397	302
Lothian	225	585	708
Strathclyde	229	595	623
Tayside	194	500	614
Scotland	207	538	529
(h) A married man with earnings as in (g), whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment			
Borders	316	524	378
Central	374	621	786
Dumfries and Galloway	310	512	475
Fife	470	706	524
Grampian	314	524	378
Highland	306	512	390
Lothian	450	755	914
Strathclyde	458	767	804
Tayside	388	646	792
Scotland	414	694	682

Notes:

(1) The average community charges for 1985-86 used in the tables were published in the *Official Report* on 20 February 1986.

(2) The underlying local income tax rates (with resource equalisation) have been estimated on the assumption that some form of resource equalisation would make the yield of 1p in the £ the same per adult in all areas.

(3) Published information on taxable resources in local authority areas is only available up to 1982-83. The sample size is small and the regional pattern shows considerable variation from year to year. Estimates of local income tax rates without resource equalisation are therefore subject to some uncertainty. Those in the table have been produced by applying the pattern of unequalised tax rates calculated for 1982-83 to 1985-86 average earnings.

(4) Estimates of average gross earnings have been taken from the 1985 new earnings survey. The average figures for Scotland have been used in each case with the exception of average earnings for the 18-24 year age group, where only GB figures were readily available.

(5) In applying local income tax rates to cases *(a)* to *(h)* it is assumed that earnings are the only sources of income and that only personal tax allowances apply.

(6) In case *(f)* it has been assumed that the unemployed son or daughter will be in receipt of unemployment benefit.

Health Service (Contracts)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer of 29 April 1986, *Official Report*, column 148, how many of the 28 contracts awarded went to private sector organisations; and in each case if he will list the bid submitted by the in-house organisation and that by the most competitive private company.

Mr. John MacKay: Four out of the 28 contracts which had been put out to tender by the end of 1986 were awarded to the private sector. Information is not collected centrally in individual tendering exercises undertaken by health boards.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 6 May 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Michael Delaney

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions is considering a prosecution over the death of Michael Delaney killed by a lorry outside News International plant in Wapping.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has considered this case and has decided that there is not sufficient evidence to justify a prosecution.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mr. Graeme Adam

Mr. Foulkes asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what progress has been reported to him following the referral to the procurator fiscal in Kilmarnock of information regarding the solicitor, Mr. Graeme Adam.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I refer to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley on 8 April 1987, at columns *298-9*. These matters are being investigated actively and the procurator fiscal will report the results as soon as possible. I do not expect to receive interim progress reports.

TRANSPORT

Public Carriage Office

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the current delays experienced by drivers and owners of London taxis in having them licensed by the Public Carriage Office; and what assessment he has made of the costs involved in such delays.

Mr. David Mitchell: I visited the Public Carriage Office on Tuesday 5 May and I understand that some of the recent delays are attributable to the increased proportion of vehicles presented in an unsatisfactory condition and requiring re-examination. Ways of reducing the delays are being explored. No assessment has been made of the costs involved.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of service at the Public Carriage Office of the introduction of a payment system; and what representations he has received from the cab trade on this matter.

Mr. David Mitchell: A cost recovery system was introduced in 1981 without effect on the level of service. I have received no recent representation on this matter.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff are currently available to inspect taxis at the Public Carriage Office; how this figure compares with each of the last five years; what assessment he has made of the implications of current staff levels for delays being experienced by cab owners and drivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: There are 27 vehicle examiners at the Public Carriage Office. This is one more than the number available over the last five years. Steps are being taken to recruit further staff.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the ratio of cabs being presented for passing, against the number of carriage offices in each of the last five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The number of carriage officers remained constant at 26 during the last five years. The number of cabs presented was:

	Number
1982	24,768
1983	25,733
1984	27,440
1985	29,167
1986	30,321

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the constraints on space at the Public Carriage Office, he will extend the hours during which it is open; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is an operational matter for the Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. I understand that from 5 May 1987 the Public Carriage Office is open to receive vehicles from 7 am, one hour earlier than previously.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to recruit more staff to the Public Carriage Office; what problems have been experienced in recruiting; if a training scheme exists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Steps are being taken by the Public Carriage Office to recruit vehicle examining staff, but problems are being experienced in recruiting suitably qualified people. Specialist training is provided.

Heathrow (Access)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will consider initiating further detailed studies of wider access to Heathrow, now that the M25 is complete;

(2) when the study of improvements in surface access between central London and Heathrow, initiated in March 1986, will be completed and published.

Mr. David Mitchell: The study of ways of improving surface access between Heathrow and central London is almost complete, and we hope to publish it shortly. Discussions on possible further studies of access to Heathrow from other directions are now taking place with local authorities.

Chapter 2 Aircraft

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he is giving to phasing out the noisier types of chapter 2 aircraft.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government are considering how all, not just the noisier types of chapter 2 aeroplanes might be phased out. It must be recognised, however, that this will be a long process that is dependent ultimately on international agreement.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to reintroduce noise insulation grants for defined areas around certain airports on a generous basis, and extended to schools and hospitals.

Mr. David Mitchell: We are assessing BAA's most recent noise insulation grants schemes at Heathrow and Gatwick. We have no plans to require BAA to introduce new schemes at these airports. It is proposed that a noise insulation grants scheme should be introduced at Stansted in due course, on the lines of the recent Heathrow and Gatwick schemes.

We are also considering whether criteria can be developed for making noise insulation grants for those parts of schools and hospitals where the work is particularly sensitive to aircraft noise.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if, in view of the fact that aircraft noise limits were set some 25 years ago, he will initiate an update of such limits;

(2) if he will introduce penalties for airlines persistently deviating from noise preferential routes without sound reason;

(3) what steps he is taking to require airport operators to monitor the track-keeping of aircraft both to and from the airport in accordance with section 68 of the Airports Act 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: BAA plc is considering, together with the Civil Aviation Authority and officials of my Department, the introduction of an integrated noise and track-keeping monitoring system for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. When we know the capability of the equipment we shall consider the criteria against which it should be operated, including track-keeping tolerances and revised noise limits.

In general, pilots carefully follow the flight instructions which implement noise preferential routes. Moreover, a sanction for failure to comply with the noise preferential route requirements at a designated aerodrome is provided for in section 78(2) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, which empowers the Secretary of State to direct an aerodrome manager to secure that the aerodrome's facilities are withheld to the extent specified from the offending aircraft operator. We shall consider whether this, or some alternative sanction, would be appropriate when the new route monitoring system is in operation.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many public complaints have been received about night flying at Heathrow and Gatwick for each year since and including 1984.

Mr. David Mitchell: The numbers were as follows:

	Heathrow	*Gatwick*
1984	115	17
1985	294	81
1986	363	109

The increase in complaints may reflect the publicity given to night noise by the Department when it initiated a review of night restrictions policy at the airports. The review is still in progress.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government finance is to be provided for (i) the docklands light railway extension to the Bank and (ii) other improvements and upgrading of the docklands light railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: The proportion of the costs of the extension of the docklands light railway to Bank and the associated upgrading of the capacity of the initial railway to be met by London Regional Transport is dependent on the outcome of its negotiations with the consortium proposing to develop the Canary wharf site. The other major proposed improvement to the docklands light railway, the extension to Beckton, would be funded by the LDDC out of the higher land values accruing to it which the extension will itself generate.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much the Canary wharf consortium is to put up for (i) the docklands light railway extension to the Bank, and (ii) other improvements and upgrading of the railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: The amount which the Canary wharf consortium will contribute to the extension of the docklands light railway to Bank and to the associated upgrading of the capacity of the initial railway is dependent on the outcome of the negotiations currently taking place between the consortium and London Regional Transport. The consortium is not involved in the financing of the other major project on the docklands light railway, the extension to Beckton.

Severn Ports (Shipping)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the maximum size of ships in deadweight tonnage so far handled by each of the ports of the Severn estuary.

Mr. David Mitchell: According to "Lloyd's Ports of the World 1987" the deadweight tonnage of the largest ship handled in each of the main ports is:

	Number
Barry	27,343
Cardiff	23,788
Newport	39,239
Sharpness	6,000

Bristol is said to be able to accommodate ships up to 70,000 deadweight tons.

The constraining factors on ship size in these ports are the length, beam and draught that can be accommodated in their entry locks.

Bournemouth

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have specifically benefited transport and roads serving the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On trunk roads, for which this Department is directly responsible Bournemouth has

benefited from improvements to the A31-A35-M27 south coast trunk route, the A36 route to Bristol and the North, and the extension of the M3 from London.

Schemes opened to traffic include bypasses on the A31 in Dorset of Wimborne, Bere Regis and Ferndown and the completion of the M3 as far as Winchester. On the A36, construction of the Warminster bypass is under way to link with the recently completed Heytesbury bypass. On the A35, work is due to start on the Dorchester bypass later this year.

Preparation is under way on a number of further projects to improve these trunk routes, including schemes to join the M3 directly with the M27 on the south coast route just north of Southampton. In addition, on the A36 preparatory work is in hand on bypasses of Salisbury, Steeple Langford, Codford and Beckington, and in last month's roads White Paper schemes were added for the improvement of the A36 between Heytesbury and Codford as well as for a bypass of West Wellow.

Responsibility for other routes serving the borough lies with the county councils. Since 1979 Dorset county council has received from the Department a total transport supplementary grant of £42 million, a substantial part of which has contributed towards the improvement of Bournemouth's local roads.

Road Schemes, Derbyshire

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will itemise details of how much has been spent upon road schemes by Derbyshire county council in each of the past three years; and if any schemes have been deferred.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the past three years, it is estimated that Derbyshire county council has spent the following amounts on road schemes costing over £1 million:

	£ million
1984-85	2·2
1985-86	0·8
1986-87	1·9

In its transport policies and programmes for 1984-85, Derbyshire county council proposed that in the above three years it would start construction on four road schemes costing over £1 million. Only two actually started within that period.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will itemise how much grant money has been received by Derbyshire county council for road schemes in each of the past three years where the money has not been spent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 1985-86 was the first year for which transport supplementary grant was restricted to capital expenditure on roads and the regulation of traffic. Taking the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 together, £6·35 million of Derbyshire county council's proposed expenditure on road schemes costing over £1 million was accepted for grant at a rate of 50 per cent. It is estimated that about £2·8 million of that expenditure was incurred in the two years. The council therefore received grant of about £1·775 million on some £3·55 million of expenditure for road schemes which was not incurred.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will itemise details of *(a)* the schemes proposed and *(b)* the schemes accepted for transport supplementary grant by Derbyshire county council in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Major schemes (those costing £1 million or more) proposed for transport supplementary grant by Derbyshire county council in its 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 transport policies and programmes are listed in the table. Minor works (those under £1 million) are not named individually in TSG settlements.

	Proposed start date	*Accepted Expenditure (£ million)*
1985-86:		
A514 Swarkestone Causeway	April 1985	1·50
A619 Tapton Bypass	September 1985	1·20
A5002 Spring Gardens relief road	September 1985	0·82
A6007 Ilkeston inner relief road	March 1986	not accepted
Total accepted expenditure		3·52
Commitments from previous years		0·06
Total accepted expenditure on which grant paid		3·58
1986-87:		
A514 Swarkestone Causeway	February 1987	0·11
A5002 Spring Gardens relief road	November 1986	0·71
A6007 Ilkeston inner relief road	July 1986	1·40
Total accepted expenditure		2·22
Commitments from previous years		1·95
Adjustment[1]		−1·40
Total accepted expenditure on which grant paid		2·77
1987-88:		
No major schemes proposed		
Commitments from previous years		1·65
Adjustment[1]		−1·30
Total accepted expenditure on which grant paid		0·35

[1] for TSG not used for the purpose for which it was provided.

Transport Grants

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those highway authorities who have incurred liability to clawback of transport grants in each if the past three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Adjustments to local highway authorities' accepted expenditure are made to ensure that over a period, expenditure on major schemes taken together, in authorities' accepted programmes is broadly in line with expenditure on major schemes accepted for grant. The present system of adjustments was introduced for shire counties in the 1986-87 settlement, and for metropolitan districts and London boroughs in 1987-88. The authorities which have been subject to adjustment of TSG accepted expenditure are:

1986-87
Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Cornwall

Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Essex
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Lancashire
Northamptonshire
Nottinghamshire
Somerset
Suffolk

1987-88
Avon
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Dorset
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Northamptonshire
Nottinghamshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Warwickshire
Wiltshire

1987-88
Met Districts
Barnsley
Coventry
Newcastle
Sheffield
Stockport

London boroughs
Ealing
Harrow
Hillingdon
Southwark
Wandsworth

Western Environmental Route

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to take with regard to the proposed western environmental route to ensure that traffic does not increase in adjacent areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have made it clear that it is not our aim to increase traffic in west London, either north or south of the river. The intention is to transfer the traffic which has to to be in the area, including most of the heavy lorries, to a purpose-built road. We want to discuss with the boroughs measures to control the traffic remaining on the existing network and to remove it from unsuitable residential roads. Having provided means by which the local environment can be improved, we wish to see measures that maintain the improvement.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to consult the public about the proposals for the western environmental improvement route.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. We shall be publishing the consultants' report on the feasibility of the route as soon as possible, probably in June. The report will include plans showing how the road might fit into the corridor. We then plan to start public consultation on the various options for standards and access early next year. There will be ample opportunity for all views to be considered before we reach any firm decisions.

Arundel Bypass (Crossbush Section)

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now respond to representations from the hon. Member for Arundel, the Lyminster parish council and residents of Crossbush and announce details for an advanced start of the Crossbush section of the Arundel bypass A27 trunk road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am still considering the representations that the Crossbush section of the Arundel bypass should be provided in advance of the full scheme. I will make an announcement as soon as I can. We expect to consult the public on possible routes for the remainder of the scheme shortly.

Toad Tunnels and Badger Crossings

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of the construction of toad tunnels and badger crossings in new road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport makes every effort to minimise any disruptive effect to wildlife arising from national road schemes. In a number of cases, tunnels or underpasses have been provided to protect animals using their accustomed routes. Each case is considered on its merits following consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council and other interested bodies.

A copy of "Transport and the Environment", published by the Department on 5 May, has been placed in the Library.

Heathrow (Security)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport who will be responsible for security at Heathrow airport in the event of privatisation of the British Airports Authority.

Mr. David Mitchell: So far as responsibilities for security are concerned, it makes no difference whether an airport is publicly or privately owned.

Open Level Crossings (Report)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to receive Professor Stott's report of his review of the safety of automatic open level crossings.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that Professor Stott needs more time than originally estimated to carry out the thorough job which he and I believe to be needed, and that he now expects to submit his report in June.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Acid Deposition

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those lakes and rivers in Northern Ireland that are suffering from acidification.

Mr. Needham: Northern Ireland has been included in the European monitoring and evaluation programme on acid deposition since 1984. It is too soon to establish long term trends although monitoring so far and routine river quality monitoring does not indicate acidification problems.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the 6,000 claims from married women for invalid care allowance have been dealt with to date; and at what rate he expects to dispose of this balance.

Mr. Needham: At 24 April 1987, 5,871 claims for invalid care allowance had been received from married women, of which 2,234 were decided by that date. In view of the very high take-up of this backdated benefit in Northern Ireland, arrangements are being made to improve substantially the present clearance rate and I would expect the present backlog to be cleared by the autumn.

Agriculture (Green Pound)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received on the implications for agriculture in Northern Ireland of the current rate of the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Representations have been received from Northern Ireland Members of Parliament and from representatives of the agriculture industry that a significant devaluation of the green pound is required to improve market support and reduce monetary compensatory amounts on trade between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. It has been made clear to the European Commission that the United Kingdom will want to improve on the reduction of four percentage points proposed by the Commission.

EMPLOYMENT

Pay

Mr. Corbyn asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the numbers and proportions of workers in Britain who are paid less than the Council of Europe decency threshold; and what was the number and proportion in 1979.

Mr. Lee: The new earnings survey indicates that in April 1986 just over 4¼ million, or about 28 per cent. of full-time adult employees in Great Britain had gross weekly earnings for a full week of less than £125·6, the latter figure corresponding to 68 per cent. of the Great Britain average for all full-time adult employees. Comparable figures for 1979 are not available. Although an advisory committee of the Council of Europe has suggested the figure of 68 per cent. of national full-time adult average earnings as significant in considering low pay, the figure has not been accepted or recognised by the United Kingdom or any other member state of the Council of Europe.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Chapman asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to introduce more accurate assessments of the numbers in employment and the registered unemployed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I currently have no plans for changing the methods of estimating the numbers employed and unemployed.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if, on the basis of the labour force survey, he will list how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women, *(c)* men and women (i) said they would like a job and were available to start work in the next two weeks, (ii) said they would like a job but were not available to start work in the next two weeks but had sought work in the last four weeks and (iii) said they would like a job; and if he will provide estimates for Scotland, Wales and each region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *332*]: I am able to give the figures requested but I trust that the hon. Member is not going to take any of this very partial selection of figures as any estimate of the number of unemployed people.

Estimates from the preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1986 of the number of people who said they would like a job for whatever reason are as shown in column 1 of the table. Columns 2 and 3 of the table extract the figures requested for those people who said they would like work and were available to start work within two weeks or, if not available, had looked for work in the last four weeks.

Of those people who said they were available for work, 1,357,000 had made no attempt to find a job in the last four weeks. This should be taken into account under any analysis, as is the case under internationally accepted definitions. On the basis of the accepted ILO definition and on the basis of the labour force survey, fewer than 3 million people were unemployed both in 1985 and 1986.

Persons not working, who would like a job

Spring 1986 (Thousands)

Region/Sex	*All who would like a job, of which:*	*Available to start within two weeks*	*Not available, but had looked in last four weeks*
All persons			
Great Britain	5,296	4,292	220
Northern	374	307	13
Yorkshire and Humberside	515	432	14

Region/Sex	All who would like a job, of which:	Available to start within two weeks	Not available, but had looked in last four weeks
East Midlands	330	293	16
East Anglia	160	122	*
South East	1,390	1,093	78
South West	346	278	15
West Midlands	538	456	18
North West	746	605	33
Wales	322	283	10
Scotland	555	461	14
Men			
Great Britain	2,608	2,245	104
Northern	204	176	*
Yorkshire and Humberside	263	233	*
East Midlands	164	140	*
East Anglia	66	54	*
South East	641	547	33
South West	156	132	*
West Midlands	273	240	11
North West	384	327	18
Wales	171	141	5
Scotland	285	254	*
Women			
Great Britain	2,688	2,047	116
Northern	169	131	*
Yorkshire and Humberside	252	199	*
East Midlands	183	143	*
East Anglia	94	67	*
South East	749	546	46
South West	189	146	*
West Midlands	264	216	*
North West	363	277	15
Wales	151	114	5
Scotland	271	207	*

* Less than ten thousand

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the April unemployment rates for the United Kingdom and for each region including Scotland and Wales using the new employment estimates contained in the 1984 Census of Employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *331*]: We plan to publish unemployment rates incorporating new employment estimates which take account of the 1984 census of employment results on Thursday 14 May 1987. At that time, revised regional and national rates will be available in the Library.

Small Firms

Mr. Haynes asked the Paymaster General what is the success rate of small firms in the creation of jobs after one, three and five years, respectively.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. However, it is estimated that between 1982 and 1984 very small firms employing less than 20 people created around 1 million extra jobs in the United Kingdom, offsetting net job losses of ¼ million in larger firms.

Chemical Industry

Mr. Dalyell asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about safety hazards in the chemical industry in the light of recent explosions at Grangemouth.

Mr. Trippier: The incidents at Grangemouth are still being investigated by inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive. Reports will be sent to the procurator fiscal. When the investigation has been completed, I shall write to the hon. Member.

Bournemouth

Mr. Butterfill asked the Paymaster General if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have benefited specifically employment, small businesses and tourism in the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. Trippier: The measures which have been available since 1979 to assist people in the Bournemouth area with employment are restart, community programme, YTS, adult training strategy, enterprise allowance scheme, job training scheme, job share, job splitting scheme, job clubs, job start, job release, voluntary projects programme, training opportunities scheme, wider opportunities training programme, open tech programme, new workers scheme, small firms employment subsidy, youth opportunities programme, young workers scheme, community industry, community enterprise programme, special temporary employment programme, travel to interview scheme and temporary short-time working compensation scheme. Many additional forms of encouragement have also been available in Bournemouth to the small business community since 1979; I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 9 February at columns *56-60* to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) which lists these in detail.

Since 1983, the only period for which statistics are readily available, the English tourist board, for which my

Department has sponsorship responsibility, has offered assistance totalling £785,000 under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 to 56 tourism projects in Bournemouth. Bournemouth has also benefited indirectly from marketing campaigns organised by the English tourist board, the Southern tourist board and the British Tourist Authority.

Parcels Services

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Paymaster General if he will instruct his enterprise and deregulation unit to conduct an urgent inquiry into the treatment by Government agencies of the express parcels services offered by the Post Office and by private courier concerns in competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

New Workers Scheme

Mr. Chapman asked the Paymaster General whether he is proposing to make any changes to the new workers scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The new workers scheme will continue, with some changes, to encourage employers to create more full-time jobs for young people under 21 at realistic rates of pay. From 1 June this year the eligibility criterial for support for jobs starting on or after that date will change as follows:

The scheme will be open only to 18, 19 and 20 year olds in their first year of employment.

Eligibility for new workers for young people aged 18 will no longer be dependent upon their having exhausted their eligibility for YTS.

The average gross weekly wage ceiling for 18 and 19 year olds will be increased from £55 to £60.

In all other respects, the scheme remains unchanged.

Booklets explaining the new workers scheme conditions in full, together with a revised application form, will be available from the employment measures units of the Department of Employment, jobcentres and careers offices shortly.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General (1) how much will be spent on training and retraining in the northern region *(a)* in the current year and *(b)* in 1983;

(2) how many places are being provided in each of his Departments training schemes in the current year in the northern region, and how many were so provided in 1983.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *331*.]: The amounts spent by employers, who have the primary responsibility for ensuring adequate provision for training, is not known. The information available about the training provided in the northern region through the Manpower Services Commission is as follows:

	1983-84		*1987-88*	
	Cost £ million	*Numbers*	*Cost £ million*	*Numbers*
YTS	[1]—	[2]28,758	67·025	23,348
Training Opportunities Scheme	15·2	5,416	—	—
Job Training Programme	—	—	[3]15·761	[4]32,297
Wider Opportunities Training Programme	—	—	1·056	4,643
TOTAL	N/A	34,174	83·842	60,188

Notes:

1. Regional spending figures were not produced for YTS for 1983-84.
2. During the first year of YTS more places were established than were eventually required by local young people. The planned figure for 1987-88 is therefore a closer reflection of local demand.
3. Since 1983-84 adult training provision has been substantially remodelled, and the new schemes include a number of developmental elements run directly from MSC Head Office. It is not possible to disaggregate expenditure on these by region and it is therefore not included in the table.
4. Figures for adult training schemes are in terms of planned starts. Training place figures are not kept, because of widely varying course lengths.

DHSS Benefits

Mr. Dewar asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the number of people in each Department of Health and Social Security office area in Scotland who have been refused entitlement to benefit *(a)* for failing the eligibility for work criteria and *(b)* following a restart interview in the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *339*]: No one can lose their benefit entitlement solely as a result of a restart interview. As regards eligibility for work, it has always been a requirement, under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments, that claimants to unemployment benefit must be available for work. Decisions about entitlements in individual cases are and always have been the responsibility of independent statutory adjudicating authorities.

The number of claims disallowed on availability grounds by centralised adjudication offices for the 12 month period up to 31 December 1986 is as follows:

Location	*Number of disallowance decisions*
Aberdeen	851
Anniesland	193
Ayr	281
Dundee	507
Edinburgh (East)	995
Edinburgh (West)	1,285
Falkirk	317
Glasgow (South Side)	737
Inverness	378
Kilmarnock	362
Motherwell	222
Paisley	685
Peterhead	414
Total	7,227

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

West Germany

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of the Federal German Republic concerning the imbalance of trade between the United Kingdom and West Germany; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table comparing the United Kingdom deficit in trade in manufactures with West Germany and with Japan as a total and per head of the population of the relevant exporting country.

Mr. Alan Clark: Trade matters are frequently discussed with our partners in the Community, including the Federal German Republic, which is the second biggest market for our exports.

The statistical information requested is in the table:

United Kingdom Trade in Manufactures[1] 1986

	Trade balance £ million	*Per head[2] £*
Trade with:		
Federal Republic of Germany	−6,714	110
Japan	−3,913	30

Notes:
[1] Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8
[2] ie. per head of population of Germany and Japan respectively.
Sources:
UK Overseas Trade Statistics
OECD Main Economic Indicators

Airbus

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to ensure that funding of the European airbus on other than commercial terms will not prejudice United Kingdom exports to the United States of America; and whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing what proportion of the increase since 1979 in United Kingdom exports of finished manufactures is accounted for by the increase in exports of such manufactures to the United States of America and how much to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Pattie: The airbus partner Governments have reaffirmed that any support for Airbus Industrie and its partner companies will be in accordance with their GATT obligations. Before agreeing to provide British Aerospace with launch aid in respect of the airbus A330/A340, the Government will wish to be satisfied that the projects have sound prospects of economic and commercial viability and that they could expect to receive a real rate of return on their investment. The increase between 1979 and 1986 in exports of finished manufactures to the United States of America was equivalent to 26 per cent. and to the EC countries 43 per cent. of the overall increase.

Bournemouth

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have benefited specifically trade and industry in the area of the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My Department has, through the encouragement of enterprise and restoration of incentives, sought to benefit industry and commerce throughout the country. The promotion of competition, in part through privatisation, the reductions in the burdens on business and the improved links between industry and education have all contributed towards improving the climate in which industry operates. More specifically, we have in the financial years 1979-80 to 1986-87 offered assistance of £2·728 million under the support for innovation scheme and £0·996 million under the provisions of section 8 of the Industrial Development Act to companies in the Bournemouth travel-to-work area.

Advertising (Space Satellites)

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from observatories and from astronomers about the impact on their work of the launching into space of satellites for the purpose of advertising; if he proposes to take any action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Privatisation (Shareholdings)

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how many shares are held by *(a)* individuals and *(b)* institutions in British Telecom plc and British Gas plc.

Mr. Butcher: Information on shareholdings in British Telecom is given on page 49 of the company's 1986 annual report, available in the Library of the House. Information on British Gas is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

International Couriers

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he has made in his discussions regarding the treatment of public and private sector international couriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Discussions are continuing both with my ministerial colleagues and with representatives of the Post Office and the private sector courier companies to identify possible ways of making progress towards parity of treatment.

Komatsu Components

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Komatsu components imported into the United Kingdom for the local assembly of hydraulic excavators are subjected to the 26·6 per cent. anti-dumping duty; and what information he has on *(a)* the quantity and *(b)* the value of such imported components in each of the past three years or comparable period.

Mr. Alan Clark: Components imported for local assembly of hydraulic excavators are not subject to anti-dumping duty unless imported as excavators in completely knocked down, disassembled or unassembled form.

Statistics for the quantity and value of components imported by Komatsu over the past three years are not available.

End-user Certificates

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he takes to monitor compliance with end-user certificates; how many contraventions have been notified to him over the latest period for which figures are available; what steps he takes to investigate alleged contraventions of the terms of such certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *318*]: Export licences are not issued unless the Government are satisfied as to the end use stated on the application. End-use certificates are just one element in the verification of export licence applications. It is not Government practice to disclose the nature of checks made.

New Companies

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many new companies have been registered in the northern region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *319*]: Jordan and Son Limited estimates that the number of companies incorporated each year and whose current registered office is located in the northern region (or, in the case of companies which have been dissolved, the last known registered office) is as follows:

	Number
1979	1,719
1980	1,794
1981	1,884
1982	2,347
1983	2,545
1984	2,537
1985	2,648
1986	3,155

A small number of companies registered in parts of Lancashire and North Yorkshire are included in the northern region figures and some around the Berwick area are excluded as the table was compiled from an analysis of postcodes of registered office addresses.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if any further companies have been approached by his Department to fund city technology colleges; and how many companies have now expressed a willingness to provide funding.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The situation remains as set out in my reply to the hon. Member on 1 April, at column 529, though I am pleased to add that since then Dixons Group plc has announced sponsorship of £1 million for the establishment of a city technology college in south Yorkshire.

Dyslexia

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research is being undertaken into dyslexia; what is his policy towards the teaching of dyslexic pupils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has devoted considerable time and money in the past few years on research into specific learning difficulties. Four research projects were funded, and a seminar was organised; I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of the report of the proceedings. Currently, research funding is being channelled towards other areas of disability. Education research tends to identify the teacher rather than the method as the most significant input into successful teaching. The needs of dyslexic pupils are best considered in teachers' in-service courses within the broad framework of pupils with special educational needs.

Bournemouth

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have benefited specifically education in the area which includes the borough of Bournemouth.

Mrs. Rumbold: Most Government resourcing of education is in the form of rate support grant, which LEAs are free to spend as they wish. Prescribed capital expenditure, also at the discretion of LEAs, totals £34·4 million for Dorset since 1981 and has enabled the LEA to include in its building programmes three major building projects at further education colleges in the Bournemouth — Poole area, costing over £5 million. Direct capital allocations for voluntary schools in Dorset total £2·4 million since 1982 and current building work includes provision of a new Anglian primary school at Muscliffe.

Dorset has benefited from various Government schemes involving direct financial assistance for the in-service training of teachers and others and its annual grants for this purpose have increased from about £70 million in 1983 to nearly £300 million in 1987. Nearly £1·3 million will be made available in 1987-88 under the new LEA training grants scheme. Since the inception of education support grants in 1985, Dorset has been particularly successful in its bids, covering many categories of activities, including, in the schools field, projects to enhance the management and curricula of rural primary schools and to develop pupil records of achievement and, in adult education, the establishment of the Dorset training consortium and a current project to develop educational provision for the unemployed.

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to provide figures which would show the total estimated cost of resources available in schools throughout the United Kingdom but unused as a result of the teachers' strike.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not available. Strike action continues to affect about 1 to 2 per cent. of schools in England and Wales each week.

School Meals

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what payments have been made or approved by him in relation to schemes submitted by local authorities for the payment of school meals supervisory assistance.

Mr. Dunn: Under the ESG scheme, my right hon. Friend made available £37·2 million in 1986-87 to meet the cost of approved proposals relating to arrangements for midday supervision. Approved bids totalling £32,608,802 were received and to date grant totalling £12,650,431 has been paid. To enable authorities to continue their existing arrangements my right hon. Friend has allocated £39 million for this purpose for 1987-88.

GCSE

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the amount of money allocated per pupil for materials necessary for general certificate of secondary education courses.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's plans for local authority current spending this year include an additional £100 million for GCSE non-teaching costs. Provision of £10 million is supported directly through education support grant and is specifically for books and equipment, including materials; the allocation of the £90 million which is supported through block grant is for individual authorities to determine but is intended to cover inter alia further spending on books and equipment. The £100 million in total is equivalent to £84 per fourth and fifth year pupil.

Bradford

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* first, *(b)* middle and *(c)* upper schools in Bradford in (i) 1983-84, (ii) 1984-85, (iii) 1985-86 and (iv) 1986-87.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios in first, middle and upper schools in Bradford in 1984, 1985 and 1986 are given in the table. Information for 1987 is not yet available.

January each year	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
First schools	20·3	20·6	20·7
Middle schools	19·2	18·1	17·6
Upper schools	15·9	15·7	15·5

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the amount of money spent per

pupil in *(a)* first, *(b)* middle and *(c)* upper schools in Bradford in (i) 1983-84, (ii) 1984-85, (iii) 1985-86 and (iv) 1986-87.

Mr. Dunn: The information in the form requested is not available. The net institutional recurrent expenditure per primary and secondary pupil is given in the following table.

	Bradford	
	Primary £ (Cash terms)	*Secondary £ (Cash terms)*
1983-84	745	890
1984-85	785	990
1985-86	850	1,085
1986-87	[1]	[1]

[1] Not available

Bradford's middle schools are deemed to be secondary and therefore the secondary cost above is the appropriate one for their middle school pupils.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been awarded in grants by the Science and Engineering Research Council to *(a)* educational institutions and *(b)* others in Yorkshire and Humberside in each year since 1979; how much the council will disburse in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1987, c. *237*]: The information requested is as follows:

SERC research grant expenditure in Yorkshire and Humberside

Financial year	*Gross expenditure £'000*
1979-80	3,021
1980-81	3,891
1981-82	4,320
1982-83	4,480
1983-84	5,633
1984-85	6,486
1985-86	6,494
1986-87	[1]7,818

[1] Provisional outturn.

Expenditure in 1987-88 is expected to be at least £7·8 million. It is not possible to give a more precise figure at this stage. All expenditure on grants, for which the SERC is responsible, relates to education institutions.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Skoal Bandits

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for how long his Department has been in consultation with the tobacco industry regarding the labelling of Skoal Bandits; and when he expects to announce the results of the discussions.

Mrs. Currie: Measures further to control Skoal Bandits, including a health warning on the label and advertising material, have been under review since last year. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the annual percentage change in revenue input volume for hospital and community health services each year since 1979; and what was the annual percentage change forecast each previous year from 1978 onwards.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 8 December 1986 at columns *69-70* for actual changes in the purchasing power of hospital and community health services current spending.

Since the introduction of cash planning from 1982-83, no forecasts have been made for changes in purchasing power. Forecasts for earlier years are not readily available on a basis consistent with my earlier reply owing to changes in the classification of HCHS current spending.

National Health Service

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the National Health Service capital expenditure projects completed in the Staffordshire Moorlands district during the past 12 years and those projected in the next five years.

Mrs. Currie: The available information about National Health Service capital projects for the parts of north Staffordshire and south-east Staffordshire health authorities which cover my hon. Friend's consitituency is given in the table. Information about schemes undertaken by the health authorities out of their annual block allocations for capital works is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to write to the chairmen of the district health authorities for details of any additional building schemes.

Projects completed from 1 January 1975.

1. St. Edwards Hospital, Cheddleton — Reorganisation of central kitchen.
   Completed—12 December 1975.
2. St Edwards Hospital, Cheddleton — Fire Alarm upgrading and provision of emergency lighting.
   Cost—£96,000.
   Completed—29 April 1977.
3. St Edwards Hospital, Cheddleton — Replacement Boiler House, Phase 1.
   Cost—£912,000.
   Completed—19 May 1981.
4. Cheadle Hospital—Grounds stabilisation.
   Cost—£49,000.
   Completed—10 November 1983.

Projects Planned to be completed by 30 April 1992.

1. Cheadle Geriatric Hospital (replacement for existing Cheadle Hospital).
   Cost—£4·3 million.
   Completion—November 1987.
2. Leek Moorlands Hospital Redevelopment (conversion to neighbourhood hospital).
   Cost—£2·1 million.
   Completion—1989.
3. Biddulph Neighbourhood Hospital.
   Cost—£2·25 million.
   Completion—1992.

Rugby DHA

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were treated in the hospital of St. Cross, Rugby in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1978.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend

the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. Information on individual patients treated is not available centrally. The available information is given in the table.

St. Cross hospital, Rugby

	1978	1985
In-Patient cases	5,667	8,585
Day cases	407	964
New out patient attendances	11,501	13,081
Total out patient attendances	47,892	55,633

East Dorset Health Authority

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have specifically benefited the East Dorset health authority.

Mr. Newton: The East Dorset health authority, together with other health authorities, has benefited in many ways from the large increase in expenditure on health services since 1979. The health authority has experienced a real growth of 36 per cent. in revenue funding in the period 1978-79 to 1986-87. Sales of land have released a further £851,176. Phase 1 of the Bournemouth district general hospital is presently under construction and approval has been given to the second phase of this major new capital development. At Poole general hospital, an extension to the maternity unit nears completion and a new geriatric unit is to start later this year, as is an acute mental illness unit at St. Anne's hospital, Canford Cliffs. East Dorset has also received £280,000 from central funds towards services for drugs misusers and £114,500 from the waiting list fund to deal with more than 2,000 additional cases. More patients have been treated than ever before, for example the numbers of in-patient cases increased by 29 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1985-86. A computerised cervical cytology call and recall system has been recently implemented in East Dorset.

Scleroderma

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the United Kingdom it is estimated were suffering from scleroderma at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. On the basis of the hospital in-patient inquiry, it is estimated that in 1984 there were 560 in-patient cases treated for systemic sclerosis (ICD 9th revision No. 710.1) including scleroderma in National Health Service hospitals in England. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Cigarettes

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish statistics showing recent trends in the use of cigarettes and other tobacco products; and if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986.

Mrs. Currie: Information up to 1986 will be available later in the year. The latest available statistics on recent trends are as follows:

(a) Prevalence of Cigarette Smoking (Great Britain)

	Adults		Children[1] (11-16 years)	
	Men Per cent.	Women Per cent.	Boys Per cent.	Girls Per cent.
[2]1978	45	37	—	—
1982	38	33	11	11
1984	36	32	13	13

Source:
General Household Survey (OPCS).
Smoking Among Secondary School Children (OPCS) 1984.
[1] Those smoking at least one cigarette a week.
[2] Information on children's smoking not available.

(b) Prevalence of smoking among men of other tobacco products (Great Britain)

	Pipes Per cent.	Cigars Per cent.
1972	14	13
1978	10	16
1984	[1]—	10

Source: General Household Survey (OPCS).
[1] Data not collected.

(c) Tobacco products released for home consumption (United Kingdom)

	Unit of Quantity	1978	1986[1]
Cigarettes	Million pieces	125,686	94,954
Cigars	Thousand kg	3,410	2,315
Hand rolling tobacco	Thousand kg	7,202	4,761
Other smoking and chewing tobacco	Thousand kg	5,487	2,732

Source: Customs and Excise.
[1] Provisional.

More detailed statistics on the use of cigarettes and other products are in the annual report of the Commissioners of HM Customs and Excise, (CM5), the general household survey (OPCS) and "Smoking Among Secondary School Children" in 1984 (OPCS). Copies are available in the Library.

NB. The Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act came into force on 8 October 1986. A circular (LAC (86)14) was issued

to local authorities and other bodies with an interest to draw their attention to the provisions and purposes of the Act. As yet there are no centrally available statistics on prosecutions under the Act.

Deaf Persons (Core Funding)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will have discussions with representatives of the Royal Association in Aid of Deaf People regarding core funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Officials from the Department met representatives of the association in November to discuss its application for a grant. I regret that in the light of those discussions we decided that funding would not be appropriate, and the association has been informed accordingly.

Acid Rain

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what discussions his officials have had with the World Health Organisation regarding the direct and indirect human health implications of air pollutants associated with acid rain and the need for research in the United Kingdom in this area; and when these discussions took place;

(2) if he will make a statement on any discussions since 1980 which he or his officials have had with their counterparts in the health or environment agencies of other Governments regarding the direct and indirect human health implications of the air pollutants associated with acid rain.

Mrs. Currie: The main links with health and environmental officials from other countries have been through meetings arranged by the World Health Organisation. The United Kingdom was represented at a conference on the health effects of acid rain organised by the European office of WHO and held in Berlin in July 1984. The European office also arranged a series of meetings between 1984 and November 1986 on air quality guidelines, attended by officials from the Department and other United Kingdom experts, at which effects of air pollutants interrelated with acid rain were considered. Additionally, departmental officials have discussed this topic with their United States counterparts, following the report of a workshop on health effects of acid rain held at the United States National Institute of Environmental Health Science in December 1983.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research has been done in the United Kingdom since 1968 to investigate the effects of ambient levels of the various pollutants associated with acid rain on sections of the population susceptible to, or suffering from asthma, bronchitis and lung cancer; and if he will summarise the results.

Mrs. Currie: The programme of research at the former Medical Research Council air pollution unit, at St. Bartholomew's hospital, started in the 1950s continued through to 1981, covering, among other things, the monitoring of effects on health of pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, sulphuric acid and other particulates, associated in other contexts with acid rain. The MRC is the main Government-funded agency for United Kingdom biomedical research receiving a grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

The work included studies of exacerbations of illness among large groups of patients with existing respiratory disability, largely attributable to bronchitis, but with other conditions such as asthma and lung cancer represented. From 1968 onwards these studies showed a sharp decline in adverse effects, corresponding with the implementation of the Clean Air Act, that gained momentum during the 1960s. Day-to-day changes in death rates from respiratory diseases have been monitored continuously since 1968, and this work still continues, in collaboration with the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Throughout that period, with much reduced levels of pollution, there has been little evidence of any of the sharp peaks in deaths such as had been seen frequently in earlier years in relation to periods of high pollution.

There is no evidence to indicate that acid rain itself has any adverse effect on health, even among people already suffering from respiratory illnesses.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research has been performed in Britain to investigate any possible links between acid deposition and the following ailments: dialysis dementia, dialysis osteomalacia, dialysis dystrophy, and Alzheimer's disease; and if he will summarise the results.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline the nature and goals of research which has been performed, or has been commissioned, since 1980 by his Department or the Medical Research Council into the direct and indirect health effects of ambient levels of air pollutants associated with acid rain and, in particular, projects concerning the human health implications of the following *(a)* inhalation of sulphuric acid and nitric acid aerosols, *(b)* inhalation of sulphates, *(c)* inhalation of particulates, *(d)* inhalation of sulphur of dioxide, *(e)* inhalation of nitrogen dioxide, *(f)* inhalation of ozone, *(g)* public consumption of potable water contaminated by aluminium, *(g)* cadmium, mercury or asbestos and *(h)* public consumption of fish contaminated by heavy metals.

Mrs. Currie: Research on the following direct effects of air pollutants associated with acid rain has been undertaken as follows:

(a) Experimental human inhalation studies with sulphuric acid mists were in progress at the clinical section of the Medical Research Council toxicology unit in 1980-81, to examine short-term effects on lung function. The MRC is the main Government-funded agency for United Kingdom biomedical research receiving a grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. There were no studies specifically with nitric acid aerosols.

(b,c,d) The same investigations included some pilot studies with sulphate aerosols and other particulates, and an extensive series of studies on sulphur dioxide had been completed prior to 1980.

(e) Research work on effects of nitrogen dioxide have been concerned more with exposures indoors, from heating and cooking sources, than with those outdoors. Work on interrelationships with respiratory illnesses, commissioned by the Department, was in progress in 1980-81, concluding with a series of publications in 1982 in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*. As the findings were complex, I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the original reports.

(f) There has been no research on the effects of inhalation of ozone, but data from environmental

monitoring carried out by Government Departments and other groups have been examined in order to consider possibilities of any direct effects on health. No detectable effects on health would be expected at the levels occurring from time to time in the United Kingdom.

(g) The Medical Research Council is undertaking studies on levels of aluminium in patients with Alzheimer's disease and on the occurrence of that disease and related neurological conditions in relation to concentrations of aluminium in potable water. Other indirect effects of acid rain that have been suggested, such as through the mobilization of heavy metals would be blocked by regulatory controls on levels of contaminants in water.

(h) Questions about public consumption of fish contaminated with heavy metals are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I understand controls exist and monitoring is effected by his Department.

The possibilities of any direct or indirect effects of acid rain on human health are kept under close scrutiny, in line with the conclusions of the WHO meeting in 1984; it is not considered that any clear indications of adverse effects have been produced.

Ambulance Service (London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice or instruction have been given to district health authorities in the Greater London area concerning the use of contractors other than the London ambulance service for provision of non-emergency ambulance services.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what scales of charge, or other financial arrangement for their services, are being made by the London ambulance service to district authorities for provision of non-emergency ambulance services.

Mrs. Currie: No charges are at present levied. Proposals to introduce charges are under consideration by the four Thames regional health authorities. The service to patients will of course continue to be free.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what tests of competence or other conditions relating to standards of remuneration and safety are applied by district or regional health authorities when using ambulance contractors for non-emergency ambulance services.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities are responsible for the day-to-day management of National Health Service ambulance services. It is for them to arrange the most appropriate, efficient and cost-effective means of transport for each of the patients the ambulance service is asked to convey. This may involve the use of taxi, hire car or other private contractors as well as volunteers. Standards of safety and payments to private contractors are not set centrally: health authorities are responsible for negotiating contracts locally and for setting standards of service, patient care, and safety.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice, guidance or instruction has been given to the London ambulance service in respect of the employment of part-time employees for manning ambulances.

Mrs. Currie: Part-time employees are used by the London ambulance service to carry out non-emergency work. The national agreement on the salaried structure for ambulance staff allows management to use any combination of working arrangements to maximise effectiveness, including the use of part-timers where appropriate.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the numbers of persons in each of the categories of personnel of the London ambulance service, including those persons now employed as part-time employees, at the latest convenient date, and the comparable numbers two years before that date.

Mrs. Currie: The information is as follows:

	May 1985 whole time equivalent	*May 1987 whole time equivalent*	*May 1987 actual staff in post*
Leading ambulance man	60	57	57
Grade 4/Qualified ambulance person	1,560	1,509	1,509
Grade 3	189	564	564
Grade 2	237		
Grade 1	53		
Ambulance person part-time	Nil	97·5	195
Total	2,099	2,227·5	2,325

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the minimum qualifications required by the London ambulance service for personnel employed in a full or part-time capacity in non-emergency ambulance services.

Mrs. Currie: Applicants must be at least 21 years old, 5 ft 3 in tall, hold a full United Kingdom driving licence and live in the Greater London area. Successful applicants are trained by the London ambulance service for duties they undertake.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what study has been made of the impact of the reduction in non-emergency ambulance services of the London ambulance service on the administration and efficiency of out-patient departments in hospitals which they serve.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in which health authorities, which have introduced computerised cervical cancer call and recall screening, the increase in the number of women covered is being limited by the need for more computer capacity than was originally provided.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 5 May 1987]: Health authorities were asked in 1966 to introduce cervical screening for women over 35 and in September 1971 it was announced that a central recall system would be introduced. In December 198[illegible], a change from national to local recall was announced because the national recall system was found to be ineffective. In April 1985 we asked

health authorities to review the organisation of their screening programmes and to introduce a computerised call/recall system. In February 1987 we asked health authorities to extend their screening programmes to cover all women aged 20 to 65. These changes have created some problems for computer capacity.

The 40 district health authorities listed may be limited in the current operation of cervical cancer screening by the capacity of the computer equipment at the associated 22 family practitioner committees. The situation in these areas is being considered by the task force that we have set up under the direction of Sir Roy Griffiths.

Barking Havering and Brentwood
North Bedfordshire
South Bedfordshire
Bolton
Bury
Hartlepool
South Tees
North Tees
Croydon
East Cumbria
West Cumbria
South Cumbria
Devon
Exeter
Plymouth
Torbay
Durham
North West Durham
South West Durham
Darlington
Gateshead
Gloucester
Cheltenham and District
Basingstoke and North Hants
Winchester
Portsmouth and South East Hants
Southampton and South West Hants
Salisbury
West Surrey and North East Hants
Huddersfield
Dewsbury
Liverpool
Newcastle
North Tyneside
Northumberland
Rotherham
South Tyneside
Sunderland
Tameside and Glossop
Trafford

THE ARTS

Bournemouth

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have specifically benefited the arts in the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. Luce: The Government's arts policies have benefited individuals and arts organisations in all parts of the country.

The public library service provided in Bournemouth by Dorset county council has benefited, as have the public library services elsewhere, from research and studies in library and information matters initiated by my Office. The results have been published in HMSO's library and information series.

The area museum council has made grants in Bournemouth totalling £19,400. The Arts Council has continued its support of the Bournemouth symphony orchestra, now located in Poole. In 1986-87, the proportion of the orchestra's grant which related to concerts given in Bournemouth was £180,000.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Parliament Street Restaurant

Mr. Sheerman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many full-time and part-time employees were working at the Treasury's Parliament street restaurant *(a)* before and *(b)* after November 1985.

Mr. Brooke: Immediately prior to November 1985, the following Civil Service Catering Organisation staff were employed in the Parliament street restaurant:

		Number
Manager	Full-time	1
Industrials	Full-time	nil
Industrials	Part-time	7

At 31 March 1987 the committee employed
2 full-time staff and
16 part-time staff.
In addition to the above there is also one catering manager employed by the Civil Service Catering Organisation.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the hourly rates of pay for the head cook, cook, assistant cook, cashier, catering assistant and kitchen porter, working at the Treasury's Parliament street restaurant;

(2) if he will give the annual holiday entitlement, sickness pay entitlement, pension and redundancy pay entitlements of catering workers at the Treasury's Parliament street restaurant *(a)* before and *(b)* after November 1985;

(3) if he will give the amount of the immediate savings after the Civil Service Catering Organisation was replaced at the Treasury's Parliament street restaurant.

Mr. Brooke: The committee will shortly be putting the contract for the Treasury staff restaurant to tender. It would be wrong of me in these circumstances to divulge commercial in-confidence information about the committee's operations and business.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many full-time equivalent new jobs were created since control of the Treasury's Parliament street restaurant was removed from the Civil Service Catering Organisation.

Mr. Brooke: Since the committee has assumed responsibility for the Treasury staff restaurant, two full jobs have been created. In addition, 10 of the 16 part-time staff are employed for 30 hours a week or more.

Bournemouth

Mr. Butterfill asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have benefited specifically individuals, commerce, and industry in the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's financial and economic policies have benefited individuals, commerce and industry in all parts of the United Kingdom. I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 19 February 1987 at columns *801-7*.

Blind People (Taxation)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the reply of 30 March, *Official Report*, column *398*, to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside *(a)* how many blind people claim the blind persons' tax allowance, *(b)* how many of these pay income-tax and *(c)* how many of these do not pay income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Customs and Excise (Strip Searching)

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Mrs. Jean Warrington was strip searched by customs officers at Gatwick airport during the first week of April; what is the policy of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise towards the use of strip searches; what guidelines are given to customs officers on the procedures for stripsearches, with particular reference to the treatment of pregnant women, and as to the sex of the officers who carried out the search; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Consignments (Customs Clearance)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will instruct Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to review its treatment of express parcels;

(2) if he will make it his policy to support the principle of rapid customs clearance for urgent consignments in meetings of the Customs Co-operation Council;

(3) if he will amend the Customs requirements for express parcels services to reflect the transit times demanded by the international business community;

(4) what representations he has received regarding the Customs treatment of express parcel services; and if he will make a statement;

(5) whether he has received a copy of the recent survey conducted by Peat Marwick into the Customs collection of duty and value added tax on items shipped by express mail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Capital gains

Mr. Hoyle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect he estimates the raising of capital gains will have on *(a)* life insurance polices and *(b)* mortgages linked to house policies; and what amount he estimates will be lost in basic payments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects that the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), will be in a position to reply to a letter sent to him on 27 January by the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne on behalf of Mrs. M. Sampson, of 5, Tregullow road, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend replied on 5 May.

Police Manpower

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of current applications for increased police manpower relate specifically to road traffic policing duties; and if he will make it his policy to take into account the Department of Transport's assessment of a national 5 per cent. increase in traffic during 1986 in considering such applications.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: About 2 per cent. of the additional police posts in current applications from provincial police authorities, which cover four financial years 1987-88 to 1990-91, relate specifically to road traffic policing duties. The 937 additional police posts which we have so far approved for provincial forces in England and Wales since April 1986 have been to meet a range of specific needs, including more foot patrols, drugs work, CID officers, motorway policing and airport policing. In considering applications for further increases in police establishments we take into account any requirements which the force may have for particular purposes, including additional traffic policing.

Bournemouth

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have specifically benefited the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. Hurd: Since 1979, the Home Office has taken a number of measures which will have been of specific benefit to the borough of Bournemouth and its inhabitants, or of more general benefit to the citizens of Dorset as a whole.

Approval was given by the Home Office for Dorset probation service to incur capital expenditure up to £46,000 in the 1982-83 financial year to provide day centre facilities at Hyde road, Bournemouth. The centre, called the Don Low Centre, has been open since 4 July 1983 and is aimed primarily at adult long-term unemployed clients of the probation service with four or five previous convictions and, probably a previous custodial sentence. In addition, approval was given last November to the building of probation offices in 1989-90, in Madeira road, at a cost of about £300,000. Both projects attract specific Home Office grant at the rate of 80 per cent. Meta House, a drug rehabilitation project for young women, which is based in Bournemouth also receives financial support through the Home Office after-care grant scheme towards the cost of places reserved for offenders. In 1985-86, the grant amounted to £11,214.

The Home Office has also authorised the payment of specific grant at the rate of 75 per cent. on £75,000 incurred by Bournemouth district council in providing a civil defence emergency centre.

As for Dorset more generally, total police manpower has increased by 212 (62 police officers and 150 civilians) since May 1979. In the same period, the authorised establishment of police officer posts has now risen to 1,235.

Petty Officer John Black

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the latest position regarding the police investigation into the death in Spain in 1983 of Petty Officer John Black, Royal Navy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, following a request by the Ministry of Defence, and Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the Metropolitan police to investigate Petty Officer Black's death, an interim report has been submitted to the Commissioner and copies sent to both Departments. The report is under consideration and it is unlikely that investigations will be complete for some weeks.

Heathrow Airport (Police)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost of policing Heathrow airport in each of the past five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the amounts paid to the Metropolitan police by the British Airports Authority in respect of Heathrow under the Policing of Airports Act, 1974 in each of the past five years are as follows:

	£
1982-83	9,327,815
1983-84	9,909,698
1984-85	10,811,069
1985-86	11,252,963
[1]1986-87	11,117,795

[1] To 28 February 1987.

Police Raids (Press Presence)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to why local newspaper reporters and photographers have been taken by the Metropolitan police on raids; on how many raids during the past 12 months local reporters and photographers have been present; and which newspapers were involved;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to arrangements made by the Metropolitan police to ensure the safety of local newspaper reporters and photographers taken on raids; and what documents such journalists are required to sign.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will reply as soon as possible.

City of Westminster (Private Bill)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he has offered to Lady Porter in respect of the terms of the City of Westminster Bill.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has suggested to the city council that it should consider amending clauses 4, 5 and 9 so as *(a)* to reduce any burdens the Bill might place on the police, and *(b)* to secure that in the usual way the revenue from fixed penalties is paid into the Consolidated Fund.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amounts are still outstanding for grants from his Department to the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Hurd: Pending receipt of audited grant claims, we estimate that £1·1 million now remains due to the London Residuary Body.

Amusement Arcades

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has decided to initiate research into the use young people make of amusement arcades and the possible addictive effect of the machines found there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: As part of our review of the law on amusement arcades, I have decided to initiate a research project which will examine the extent of the use which young people make of amusement machines in arcades and other places, whether there are signs that they become addicted to playing the machines found there and whether there is evidence of machines leading to anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour. It is hoped that the research will be completed by early next year.

In addition, I have asked the chairman of the Gaming Board if he will arrange for a report to be prepared on amusement arcades in the light of the concern which has been expressed. To this end, Gaming Board inspectors will be making a number of visits to arcades over the next six months.

These steps are being taken in order to assess whether there is hard evidence of social problem which might justify new controls on amusement arcades. I look forward to considering the results and have no plans at present for fresh legislation on this subject.

Immigration

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained overnight during 1986 in *(a)* Harmondsworth detention centre, *(b)* Queen's building, Heathrow and *(c)* Beehive, Gatwick.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *421*]: The information requested is as follows:

(a) 3,842
(b) 1,891
(c) 2,217

Some passengers were detained in more than one centre.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of passengers detained overnight under Immigration Act powers during 1986, by nationality.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *421*]: The available information relates to passengers held in Immigration detention units and police cells. No central record is maintained of the nationality of

passengers detained in Prison Department accommodation and this information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. As some passengers were detained in more than one location, there is an element of double counting.

	Immigration accommodation	*Police cells*
Afghanistan	58	4
Albania	1	0
Algeria	136	32
Andorra	8	0
Antigua	4	0
Argentina	11	1
Australia	6	1
Bahamas	0	1
Bangladesh	652	201
Barbados	1	2
Belgium	1	0
Belize	2	0
Benin	0	2
Bermuda	1	1
Bolivia	1	0
Brazil	40	6
Bulgaria	2	0
Burkina Federation	1	1
Burma	4	0
Burundi	1	0
Cameroon	6	0
Canada	7	3
Chad	9	0
Chile	16	2
China	34	2
Colombia	93	18
Costa Rica	1	0
Cyprus	21	3
Czechoslovakia	1	0
Denmark	2	3
Dominica	0	1
Ecuador	5	0
Egypt	29	3
El Salvador	4	0
Ethiopia	25	2
Fiji	1	1
Finland	4	1
France	1	4
Gabon	1	0
Gambia	3	6
Germany (Federal Republic)	3	8
Ghana	877	118
Greece	10	2
Grenada	0	1
Guatemala	1	1
Guyana	6	1
Haiti	1	0
Hong Kong	39	19
Hungary	11	4
Iceland	1	0
India	854	157
Indonesia	0	7
Iran	464	50
Iraq	53	3
Israel	40	11
Italy	9	0
Ivory Coast	2	0
Jamaica	57	5
Japan	11	1
Jordan	5	0
Kenya	16	1
Kiribati	1	0
Korea	8	0
Kuwait	4	0
Lebanon	31	8
Liberia	1	0
Libya	24	9
Malaysia	45	1
Malta	4	0
Mauritius	23	4
Mexico	14	3
Morocco	84	32
Namibia	1	0
Nepal	6	4
New Zealand	2	1
Netherlands	15	6
Nigeria	1,074	203
Norway	9	5
Oman	2	0
Pakistan	832	183
Panama	1	0
Peru	13	4
Philippines	29	0
Poland	10	2
Portugal	126	14
Romania	2	0
St. Lucia	2	0
St. Kitts	1	0
Saudi Arabia	16	1
Senegal	1	0
Seychelles	38	0
Sierra Leone	10	1
Singapore	12	2
Somalia	30	0
South Africa	21	1
Spain	100	14
Sri Lanka	406	21
Sudan	9	1
Surinam	4	2
Sweden	8	11
Switzerland	11	10
Syria	14	2
Tanzania	42	5
Thailand	49	0
Togo	1	0
Trinidad and Tobago	2	0
Tunisia	46	3
Turkey	624	147
Uganda	70	3
USA	159	9
USSR	2	0
Venezuela	3	0
Yogoslavia	43	6
Zaire	2	1
Zambia	1	0
Zimbabwe	18	1
Nationality Doubtful	207	56
British Overseas Citizens	10	0
Other Commonwealth Citizens	37	6
Other Foreign Nationals	68	0
British Dependent Territories Citizens	0	1
Total	8,081	1,473

WALES

Disabled Persons Act 1986

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) why no additional funds have been made available to local authorities in Wales to enable them to carry out the provisions of the Disabled Persons Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from the Wales Council for the Disabled concerning implementation of the Disabled Persons Act 1986; and what responses he has sent.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The implementation of the Act was fully discussed with representatives of the Wales

Council for the Disabled when I called at its offices in Caerphilly on 26 March, and I have subsequently replied to a letter sent to me by the council. The resource implications for local authorities will be considered in the context of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate what categories of staff trainees in assisting mentally handicapped people have been found to be in shortage in Wales leading to delays in the implementation of the all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped people; and what steps he is taking to try and overcome such shortages.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am not aware that the strategy has been delayed by shortages of trainees, but we are planning to hold formal review meetings with all 10 joint planning teams in Wales during the year and shall consider carefully whatever representations are then made.

Public Health Laboratory Service

Sir Anthony Meyer asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, in view of recent developments, in particular the increasing threat from the spread of AIDS, he will take steps to ensure the existence and continued effectiveness of the peripheral laboratories in Wales to the Public Health Laboratory Service.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend is well aware of the vital contribution which the public health laboratory service makes to meeting threats to public health, such as AIDS. The PHLS has made clear its intention to ensure that an efficient and accessible service is available and the Welsh Office will continue to work with the PHLS to ensure this for Wales.

Children (Cardiac Surgery)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of children from Wales under 12 months old, one to three years old, and over three years old, who received cardiac surgery in hospitals in Wales and England in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what is the percentage in each category who were treated in Welsh hospitals.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Comprehensive information about patients receiving cardiac surgery outside Wales is not readily available. The following table contains an analysis of the numbers of children who were discharged from hospital in Wales in 1986 having been in the care of a cardiac surgeon.

	Age (years)		
	Under 1	*1 to 3*	*4 to 15*
Number of discharges/deaths	2	5	9

Community Charge

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* updated tables showing the import of the community charge and non-domestic rate proposals for each local authority in Wales on a basis comparable with the information supplied by the Secretary of State for the Environment referred to in answers to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in relation to local authorities in England, 1 April, *Official Report*, column 547.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is given in the following table.

Summary of impact of Green Paper proposals on domestic and non-domestic sectors for rating authority areas in Wales in 1986-87

	Domestic sector				*Non-domestic sector*		
	Overspend on GRE	*Average rate bill per adult*	*Community charge no safety net*	*Community charge "safety net"*	*Actual rate poundage now*	*National non-domestic rate poundage*	*Change to NNDR poundage percentage*
	£ per adult	*£*	*£*	*£*	*p*	*p*	
Alyn and Deeside	11	148	115	148	220·1	220·6	·2
Colwyn	18	168	122	168	227·1	220·6	−2·9
Delyn	14	147	119	147	223·1	220·6	−1·1
Glyndŵr	13	125	118	125	217·8	220·6	1·3
Rhuddlan	15	151	120	151	224·1	220·6	−1·6
Wrexham Maelor	14	133	119	133	224·3	220·6	−1·7
Carmarthen	−1	96	103	96	222·9	220·6	−1·0
Ceredigion	−2	111	102	111	220·0	220·6	·2
Dinefwr	−7	86	97	86	217·2	220·6	1·5
Llanelli	18	108	123	108	237·0	220·6	−6·9
Preseli Pembrokeshire	−4	104	100	104	270·2	220·6	·2
South Pembrokeshire	−6	124	96	124	223·4	220·6	−1·2
Blaenau Gwent	17	92	121	92	217·4	220·6	1·5
Islwyn	3	97	107	97	210·0	220·6	5·0
Monmouth	4	129	108	129	207·5	220·6	6·3
Newport	5	142	107	142	211·6	220·6	4·3
Torfaen	11	118	115	118	217·9	220·6	1·3
Aberconwy	4	137	107	137	208·2	220·6	6·0
Arfon	4	101	107	101	206·6	220·6	6·8
Dwyfor	1	127	105	127	210·2	220·6	4·9
Meirionnydd	−5	122	97	122	204·0	220·6	8·1
Ynys Môn	−1	126	102	126	205·9	220·6	7·2
Cynon Valley	27	91	133	91	237·5	220·6	−7·1

	Overspend on GRE	Domestic sector: Average rate bill per adult	Domestic sector: Community charge no safety net	Domestic sector: Community charge "safety net"	Non-domestic sector: Actual rate poundage now	Non-domestic sector: National non-domestic rate poundage	Change to NNDR poundage percentage
	£ per adult	£	£	£	p	p	
Merthyr Tydfil	45	107	152	107	248·0	220·6	−11·0
Ogwr	37	129	143	129	248·0	220·6	−11·0
Rhondda	38	74	145	74	248·0	220·6	−11·0
Rhymney Valley	20	115	145	115	245·3	220·6	−10·1
Taff-Ely	42	126	148	126	247·0	220·6	−10·7
Brecknock	—	101	105	101	209·0	220·6	5·5
Montgomeryshire	−9	107	96	107	197·9	220·6	11·5
Radnor	−3	112	102	112	202·8	220·6	8·8
Cardiff	−10	157	91	157	203·9	220·6	8·2
Vale of Glamorgan	6	143	107	143	230·0	220·6	5·0
Port Talbot	56	121	158	121	235·3	220·6	−6·2
Llw Valley	38	108	142	108	230·5	220·6	−4·3
Neath	23	114	126	114	222·2	220·6	−·7
Swansea	48	140	151	140	237·4	220·6	−7·1
District average	15	117	117	117	220·6	220·6	—

Renal Dialysis

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he proposes to improve facilities for renal dialysis in south Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am pleased to announce that, following the establishment of subsidiary renal dialysis units at Carmarthen and Bangor to improve access to renal dialysis for patients in those areas, two further units are to be established. Following consultation with Gwent, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan health authorities and an appraisal of the options presented by them, I have decided that subsidiary renal dialysis units should be provided at the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff and at Prince Charles hospital, Merthyr Tydfil. When operational they will improve the service to patients in south-east Wales, provided at present by the main renal unit at Cardiff royal infirmary. The costs of the units will be funded by the Welsh Office and each will have five dialysis stations.

I intend that the units will be established as soon as possible. Invitations to tender for the construction and running of them will be extended to South and Mid Glamorgan district health authorities, experienced voluntary organisations and private sector companies.

This development, together with the "Lifeline Wales" project which was launched last year with the support of the Welsh Office to increase the awareness of the value of organ donations and to encourage kidney transplantation where appropriate, will significantly enhance the treatment facilities for patients suffering end-stage renal failure.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the enactment of the Abolition of Domestic Rates, Etc. (Scotland) Bill will permit the names and addresses of those who pay the community charge to be sold in machine-readable form or made available to other government departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Clause 20 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates, Etc. (Scotland) Bill provides that copies of those parts of the community charges register which are to be available for public inspection may be sold by the regional or islands council in either documentary or machine-readable form.

Countryside Commission for Scotland

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of the Countryside Commission for Scotland, including their chairman, with their biographical details and their dates for reappointment.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is given in the following table.

Membership of the Countryside Commission for Scotland

Name	Occupation	Present appointment terminates
J. R. Carr (Chairman)	Managing Director, Moray Estates Development Company	1 January 1990
J. Arnott (Vice Chairman)	BBC Radio Producer	28 February 1990
Mrs. F. Ballantyne	Textile Industry	29 February 1988
D. J. Bennet	Strathclyde University, Lecturer and author	28 February 1990
Quinton Brown	Retired Managing Director, Scottish Agriculture Industries	28 February 1990
Prof. Ian M. M. Cunningham	Principal, West of Scotland Agriculture College	28 February 1990
Prof. C. H. Gimingham	Department of Botany, Aberdeen University	29 February 1988
Provost D. S. Grainger	Chairman, Clydebank District Council	28 February 1990
D. Ross	Principal, Benmore Outdoor Centre	29 February 1988

Name	Occupation	Present appointment terminates
R. R. Steedman	Architect	29 February 1988
G. G. Stewart	Retired Forestry Commissioner	29 February 1988
I. R. Thomson	Farmer and author	29 February 1988

Cigarettes

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish statistics showing recent trends in the use of cigarettes and other tobacco products; and if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 in Scotland.

Mr. John Mackay: The currently available statistics are as follows:

(1) Prevalence of smoking among adults aged 16 and over in Scotland (a)

Year	Men Per cent.	Women Per cent.
1978	48	42
1982	45	39
1984	43	35

(2) Prevalence of smoking among secondary schoolchildren in Scotland (Smoking more than one cigarette a week) *(b)*

Year	Boys Per cent.	Girls Per cent.	All Per cent.
1982	15	14	15
1984	16	17	16

Details of the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 were circulated to general managers of health boards by circular NHS 1986(GEN)21 of 2 October 1986. The circular was also sent to chief constables, directors of education, directors of social work, health education officers, procurators fiscal, regional reporters to children's panels and regional chairmen of children's panels. Statistics on the number of offences under section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 are not separately identifiable in the Scottish Home and Health Department statistics.

Sources:

(a) General Household Surveys.

(b) Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Reports on Smoking among Secondary Schoolchildren 1982 and 1984.

South of Scotland Electricity Board

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to retain the South of Scotland Electricity Board in public ownership.

Mr. Lang: There are no present plans to take the South Electricity Board out of public ownership.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the number of patients on hospital waiting lists in each of the health board regions in Scotland indicating whether they were in-patients or out-patients, in each of the years 1983 to 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: Statistics on out-patient waiting lists are not held centrally. The numbers on hospital in-patient waiting lists at 30 September in the years in question were as follows:

	1983	1984	1985	1986[1]
Scotland	88,338	83,077	77,677	80,862
Argyll and Clyde	7,137	7,627	7,289	6,528
Ayrshire and Arran	5,051	5,045	5,120	4,862
Borders	402	255	318	301
Dumfries and Galloway	2,871	2,529	2,687	3,205
Fife	6,477	6,127	5,816	5,468
Forth Valley	3,547	2,766	2,593	2,558
Grampian	10,247	9,172	8,641	9,969
Greater Glasgow	19,266	18,749	16,006	17,866
Highland	1,941	1,806	2,543	3,040
Lanarkshire	8,282	7,520	6,605	6,249
Lothian	14,717	13,845	13,381	14,341
Orkney	56	54	58	50
Shetland	125	140	145	142
Tayside	8,112	7,369	6,494	6,215
Western Isles	107	73	61	68

[1] Provisional.

Note: All data exclude Joint User and Contractual Hospitals.

Scottish Museums Council

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to bring the funding of the Scottish Museums Council to a level of parity with the English area museum councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend will consider the funding of the Scottish Museums Council as part of his response to the report on museums in Scotland by the working party of the Museums and Galleries Commission chaired by Professor Hamish Miles (the Miles report).

Cadmium and Mercury

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what research has been undertaken in Scotland into levels of cadmium and mercury in the flesh of grouse or other game and in the flesh of trout and pike; and what were the results of that analysis.

Mr. John MacKay: There is currently no programme being undertaken on heavy metals by my Department either for fish or for grouse or other game. A survey of heavy metals in fish flesh, including cadmium and mercury, was however conducted by my Department's freshwater fisheries laboratory in 1977. The values for cadmium in trout and pike were less than 0·04 micrograms per kilogram. The value of mercury in trout ranged from 0·15 to 0·06 micrograms per kilogram and in pike from 0·9 to 0·2 micrograms per kilogram. There is no reason to believe that these levels have increased significantly.

Peterhead Prison (Prisoners' Grievances)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland into prisoner grievances at Her Majesty's prison, Peterhead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland on the inquiry I requested into grievances of prisoners about conditions and treatment at Peterhead prison. I am placing copies of the report in the Library together with my initial response to its 11 recommendations. Copies of the report and my initial response have been sent to my hon. Friend the member for Banff and Buchan, to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the Chairman of the Scottish all-party penal affairs group and to other interested bodies. Copies of the report can be purchased from my Department.

I will give further close consideration to the findings of this report and the "points of note" which Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons has drawn to my attention. A further response to those issues or suggestions will be made in due course.

Scottish Development Agency (Consultants)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total value of work of all kinds put out to consultants by the Scottish Development Agency for each of the last five years, the name of each company and the value of each contract awarded; whether the contract was awarded on the basis of tenders in each case; and if he will give the reasons in those cases where tenders were not invited.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. 467]: The amounts spent by the Scottish Development Agency on consultants' fees for the last five years are given in the following table. A detailed breakdown comprising the names of companies which have successfully tendered for contracts and the value of those contracts cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate expense and breaching commercial confidentiality. It is Scottish Development Agency practice to require all contracts to the value greater than £2,000 to go to competitive tender with not less than three quotations required. This requirement is breached only in exceptional circumstances, eg where the source of expertise can only be obtained from one party; in such cases a single tender procedure is followed.

	Capital	*Revenue*	*Total*
1981-82	7,493,870	3,115,748	10,609,618
1982-83	9,308,430	4,265,593	13,574,473
1983-84	8,329,566	5,086,337	13,415,903
1984-85	10,167,582	4,953,324	15,120,906
1985-86	10,816,582	8,568,179	19,384,767
1986-87	12,568,022	6,851,863	19,419,885

Note A: The capital column includes fees to civil engineers, architects, surveyors, heating and electrical consultants.

Note B: The revenue column includes fees on research and development, advisory services, appraisal and administration, ie tax and accountancy advice, pension and legal consultancies.

Fisheries Protection

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 27 March, *Official Report*, column 300, regarding the Fokker F27-200 to be used for fishery surveillance patrols, he will list the owners of the aircraft since 1959 and the type of and location of services for which it was used during that period; what is the estimated remaining life of the aircraft in terms of flying hours in Scottish fishery patrol conditions; what is the anticipated average number of hours per cycle in this service; and to what extent the manufacturer of the aircraft is directly involved in its current overhaul.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, Tuesday 5 May 1987]: The F27 was in service as follows:

21 October 1959-31 October 1973—Trans Australian Airlines.

1 November 1973-14 July 1984—Air Niugini (Air New Guinea) during this period the aircraft was operated and maintained by Trans Australian Airlines.

15 July 1984-to date—Air UK.

Throughout the above periods the aircraft was operated in a public transport passenger carrying role.

The aircraft has about 21,500 cycles remaining in accord with the Fokker maritime structural integrity programme and it is anticipated that the average duration of each cycle on fishery surveillance will be eight hours with up to 400 cycles annually undertaken on fishery patrols, depending on seasonal and other factors.

The manufacturers of the F27 are directly involved in the modifications relating to the enhanced endurance of the aircraft and in providing flight manual amendments. The manufacturers' director of flight testing will be involved in the certification and test flying on completion of the overhaul and modification.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the registration index of the Fokker F27 that he is acquiring for fishery surveillance; what will be the cost of changing the registration index; and what the next index will be.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: The registration index of the Fokker F27 when the tender acquisition was accepted was G-BLML and will be G-SOFS when acquired by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The cost of the change in registration is £190 and is already contained within the total acquisition price.

Milk Quota

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the transfer of milk quota from Scotland to other parts of the United Kingdom; and what effect this will have on the dairy production and processing industries in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: At 1 April this year 4·425 million litres of wholesale quota, being the required Scottish share (proportionate to production) of the total for Great Britain, was transferred to Northern Ireland. The transfer of quota was effected at the insistence of the European commission to align the treatment of Northern Ireland producers with special needs more closely with that of their counterparts elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The effect is a provisional reduction in wholesale quotas in Scotland of 0·35 per cent., an amount which may be subsequently adjusted depending on the success of an outgoers' scheme which will be opened shortly to try to obtain the quota voluntarily. Compensation at the rate of 27·5p per litre over seven years will be paid. A reduction of about one third of 1 per cent. of wholesale quota will not have any significant effects on the dairy sector in Scotland.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Appeals

14. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to ensure that when a planning appeal has been lost by developers and won by local authorities, no further applications, either original or amended, can be submitted on all or any part of that land within 10 years of the date of the appeal inspector's report containing the dismissal of the appeal.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Such a limitation would unjustifiably restrict development which might reasonably be permitted.

Community Charge

15. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the likely level of the community charge, without safety nets, in Manchester.

Dr. Boyson: Illustrated figures were placed in the Library on 1 April showing the community charge figure in each area if the system had been fully in operation in 1986-87, and on the basis of expenditure and grant figures applicable to that year. On these assumptions, the community charge in Manchester would have been £250.

21. **Mr. Blair** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received as to the minimum level of community charge to be paid by those on low incomes.

Dr. Boyson: I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) earlier. My right hon. Friend has received, and continues to receive, a substantial number of representations on this issue.

24. **Mr. Randall** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the likely level of the community charge, without safety nets, in the city of Kingston upon Hull.

Dr. Boyson: Illustrative figures were placed in the Library on 1 April showing the community charge in each area if the system had been fully in operation in 1986-87, and on the basis of expenditure and grant figures applicable to that year. On these assumptions, the community charge in Kingston upon Hull would have been £205.

40. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further representations he has received as to the minimum level of community charge to be paid by persons on low income.

49. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received as to the minimum level of community charge to be paid by those on low incomes.

Dr. Boyson: I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) earlier today. My right hon. Friend has received, and continues to receive, a substantial number of representations on this issue.

41. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further representations he has received as to the introduction of a community charge in England.

Dr. Boyson: There are no proposals for the introduction of a poll tax, but my right hon. Friend continues to receive representations from members of the public, local authorities and other organisations about the introduction of the community charge.

47. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the likely level of the community charge, without safety nets, in Cleveland.

Dr. Boyson: Illustrative figures were placed in the Library on 1 April showing the community charge figure in each area if the system had been fully in operation in 1986-87, and on the basis of expenditure and grant figures applicable to that year. On these assumptions, community charges in Cleveland would have been in the range £220 to £242 without safety nets.

52. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the likely level of the community charge in major cities in Yorkshire.

Dr. Boyson: Since we published illustrative community charge figures on 1 April we have received a number of representations about the likely level of the community charge in Yorkshire.

North-east New Towns

16. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the three north-east new towns.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend hopes to do so shortly.

Rural Areas (Development and Conservation)

17. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from the National Trust concerning local development and conservation in rural areas.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have recently received comments from the National Trust on the draft circular "Development Involving Agricultural Land" and on our proposals for the future of development plans. These are, of course, being given very careful consideration.

Architectural Heritage

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives he has taken, and proposes to take, to ensure the conservation of Britain's architectural heritage.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since 1979, the Department's support for the built heritage has increased by over 30 per cent. in real terms. The stock of listed buildings has grown exponentially. We shall soon be adding to the lists outstanding buildings of the post-1939 period.

Rate Support Grant (Basildon)

19. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on rate support grant limitation for Basildon.

Dr. Boyson: Basildon district council is a very high spender and has been subject to selective rate limitation in

each of the last three years. The expenditure level set for the council under the 1984 Rates Act has been the same in cash terms in each of those years and this has provided real benefits to Basildon ratepayers. The local rate has risen by only 5 per cent. over the last two years combined, well below the rate of inflation and less than half of the rise for other shire districts over the same period.

Planning Circulars

20. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the content of planning circulars.

Mr. Waldegrave: We receive many and various comments about the content of planning circulars, for which I am grateful. In particular we have received much helpful comment on the draft circular on development involving agricultural land.

Water Quality

22. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many water catchment areas in Britain are presently exempt from the terms of the European Commission water quality directive.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have granted derogations under article 9 of the drinking water directive in respect of 195 public water supply zones in England. We have also applied to the European Community Commission for an extended period for compliance under article 20 in respect of 87 water supply zones.

39. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next be meeting his European counterparts to discuss the problems of water pollution and nitrate contamination.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall attend the next Environment Council on 21 May, at which we expect at least one proposal relating to the discharge of dangerous substances to water—concerning the discharge of aldrin, dieldrin and endrin—to be on the agenda.

46. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends meeting representatives of the Nature Conservancy Council to discuss water pollution problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to meet representatives of the Nature Conservancy Council to discuss water pollution problems. If the hon. Member has a particular problem in mind and will let me have the details, I will look into it.

51. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current policy towards water quality problems posed by agricultural pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department's general policy on the control of river pollution, including agricultural pollution, is to restore and maintain the wholesomeness of our rivers. Part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 provides water authorities with a comprehensive system of controls, including the power to prosecute in appropriate cases. While the existing framework of controls is generally considered to be adequate, the Department is considering whether there is a need to introduce regulations which extend and strengthen the existing powers of water authorities in order to reinforce the voluntary efforts currently being made to combat agricultural pollution.

Housing Authority Capital Receipts

23. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the likely capital receipts of housing authorities over the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Our estimate of local authorities' housing receipts in 1987-88, as set out in the public expenditure White Paper, is £1·58 billion. Receipts are expected to continue at broadly this level in 1988-89.

Islington (Finance)

25. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the cost of central Government finance given to the London borough of Islington from all sources in 1979-80, 1983-84 and proposed for 1987-88 at constant 1979-80 prices, and as a proportion of the council's total spending.

Dr. Boyson: The information readily available covers rate support grant, housing subsidies, housing benefit, specific revenue grants and capital grants. Because of changes to the grant system, however, the figures are not on a comparable basis each year.

The figures are, at 1979-80 prices

	£ million
1979-80	81
1983-84	72
1986-87	81

(no information is available for 1987-88).

The proportions these amounts represent of Islington's total gross spending are 47 per cent. in 1979-80 and 44 per cent. in 1983-84. (No figures of gross spending are yet available for 1986-87).

Homelessness

26. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his estimate of the total cost to local authorities of providing temporary shelter to homeless families in 1987-88, in so far as it constitutes a component in the total grant-related expenditure assessments for local authorities for that year.

30. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the number of people accepted as being homeless and those placed in bed and breakfast accommodation is rising or falling.

Mr. John Patten: Regrettably, both homeless acceptances and the use of bed and breakfast are increasing. Expenditure on temporary accommodation is not separately identifiable within GRE assessments since they relate to authorities' needs to spend, not to estimates of expected expenditure.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the number of those for whom local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland respectively, accepted responsibility for securing accommodation who were outside Great Britain a year earlier; what was their place or country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The information available to the Department is that, in 1986, some 4,000 households accepted as homeless by local authorities in England were outside Great Britain a year earlier. For the position in Wales and Scotland, I refer my hon. Friend to the respective Secretaries of State.

Ground-Water Protection Zones

27. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in favour of ground-water protection zones.

Mr. Waldegrave: Designation of protection zones to safeguard vulnerable water resources was contained in the Government's consultation paper, "The Water Environment: The Next Steps", published last year. A total of 185 responses were received to the consultation paper. Certain further representations have meanwhile been received on the use of protection zones in limiting nitrate levels in drinking water, following publication in December of the report of the nitrate co-ordination group.

Power Generation and Resource Recovery Unit, Liverpool

28. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to hold a public inquiry into the proposal to construct a power generation and resource recovery unit on a site in Stonebridge lane in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I see no reason to justify holding a public inquiry into these proposals. The plant will be subject to strict operational control by the local authority as a waste disposal site and, as regards atmospheric emissions, by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution as an electricity works.

Ozone Layer

29. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he is having with his colleagues in the European Council of Ministers concerning the protection of the ozone layer.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Environment Council on 19 March, at which I represented the United Kingdom, discussed the Community's stance for current negotiations of international measures to control chlorofluorocarbons in the context of the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer. I anticipate further discussion at the Council on 21 May.

Green Belt (Epping Forest)

31. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from people in the Epping Forest district of Essex about proposed encroachments upon the green belt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has received representations asking him to call in for his own decision a proposed indoor tennis and leisure centre at the former RAF barrage balloon site, Buckhurst Hill. Representations have also been received opposing a proposed development of 3,500 houses known as Brenthall park, to the south east of Harlow, and in respect of proposed residential development at Roydon.

While I am unable to comment upon individual cases which are before my right hon. Friend or which may come before him, I would take this opportunity to reaffirm the Government's strong commitment to the maintenance of approved green belts.

Sports Council

32. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Sports Council to discuss sport in schools.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend, the Minister with responsibity for sport, meets the chairman and members of the council frequently and discussed aspects of school sport with them on 18 March during a visit to Lilleshall and on 26 March at the council's recreation management seminar at Harrogate.

House Building

33. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in which of the last 30 years the numbers of homes completed by local authorities in Great Britain was lower than the number completed in 1986.

Mr. John Patten: None. But private sector completions were the highest since 1973, and the total housing stock has grown by 1·4 million since this Government came to office in 1979. Over the same period the number of households is estimated to have increased by only about 1·25 million; so the overall balance of supply and demand has improved significantly.

Housing Investment Programme

34. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of housing authorities have been given housing investment programme approvals for 1987-88 which are lower than that for which the authority sought approval.

Mr. John Patten: In their housing investment programme submissions local authorities are asked to state the total size of their proposed capital programme. The figures they give cannot therefore be compared with the amounts they received in housing investment programme allocations, because we expect more than half of local authority capital expenditure on housing in 1987-88 to be funded from capital receipts rather than from allocations.

Slum Clearance

35. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures he has on progress with slum clearance.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available information is from English local authorities' returns for the financial year 1985-86. Summary figures were published in table 2·25 of "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 28, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Rented Housing Market

36. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the level of mobility in the rented housing market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The level of mobility in the private rented sector has been adversely affected by the decline in the supply of privately rented accommodation. The Government believe that the sector has an important role to play in meeting housing need. We hope to introduce measures in the next Parliament to stimulate the supply of private rented homes and thus to increase mobility particularly for job-related reasons.

London Grants Committee

37. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the London grants committee to discuss its budget for 1987-88.

Mr. Ridley: I met representatives of the committee on 24 March. As a result of representations at the meeting, and others received in response to consultation, I have decided not to proceed to make an order under section 48 of the Local Government Act 1985 to set a ceiling of £28·5 million on the budget of the committee for 1987-88.

The Grants Committee has now fixed a budget of the same amount. I wished to demonstrate support for the voluntary sector in London by proposing to exercise my powers. Having considered all representations received, I have decided it is no longer necessary to proceed further. I am pleased that my action has received its desired effect of establishing an agreed budget and removing uncertainty over the funding of the voluntary groups.

New Houses

38. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure available for the number of new houses which stand unsold and unoccupied.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available.

Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill

42. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have received representations from Members of Parliament, interested organisations and individuals. Their views are being fully taken into account during the passage of the Bill.

Water Authority Financing

43. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding water authority financing.

Mr. Ridley: Within the last month a number of letters about representations made by the Lancashire water services council have been received. The hon. Member has been sent a copy of the reply sent to the council.

Derelict Land Reclamation

44. **Mr. Dorrell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department gives to members of the public and local residents who wish to bring derelict plots of land back into use.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend maintains registers of publicly owned unused and underused land, some of which may be derelict. Members of the public may inspect a copy of the register for their area, free of charge, during normal office hours, at the principal office of their district council or London borough council. The registers for the districts in each region are also available for inspection at the appropriate regional office of the Department and a complete set of all the registers is open for inspection at the Department's offices at 2 Marsham street, London SW1.

In addition, my right hon. Friend has invited people to bring to his attention areas of publicly owned land, of whatever size, which they believe should be entered on the register, and, where land is already registered, to request him to use his powers to direct the owners to dispose of it.

Where land is in need of reclamation before it can be brought back into use, application can be made to the Department for derelict land grant. Guidance notes setting out the principles and availability of derelict land grant are provided on request. Potential applicants are advised to consult the appropriate regional office of the Department at an early stage in drawing up their proposals for reclamation.

Council House Building

45. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new council houses are expected to be completed in 1987.

50. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new council homes are expected to be completed in 1987.

Mr. Ridley: It is not the practice for the Department to make forecasts of house building completions.

Private Rented Dwellings

48. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of dwellings in England is privately rented; and how this compares with other countries in the European Economic Community.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Royal Dockyards

53. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning progress of the schemes he announced on 31 March concerning developments in the royal dockyards.

Mr. John Patten: The announcement of 31 March concerned the Secretary of State's approval to the London Docklands Development Corporation's overall strategy for the royal docks. The individual schemes to regenerate the area are matters for more detailed consideration by the corporation. Several such schemes are currently being discussed with the developers concerned.

Urban Programme (Wirral)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list how much urban programme money has been granted to Wirral in the last three financial years, and the extent to which Wirral has spent this allocation.

Mr. John Patten: The information is as follows:

Financial year	Allocation £ million	Outturn spend £ million
1984-85	7·81	7·06
1985-86	6·16	5·21
1986-87	6·65	[1]6·65

[1] Estimated.

These figures include Wirral's inner area programme allocation (£3·67 million each year) and additional grants made available from the urban programme for specific special housing initiatives.

Council House Sales

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council-owned houses in the borough of Brighton have been sold since the implementation of the Housing Act 1980.

Mr. Tracey: Reported sales of dwellings by Brighton borough council appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are available in the Library.

Financial years	Issue number
1980-81	62
1981-82	63
1982-83	67
1983-84	75
1984-85	79

Brighton borough council has reported selling 194 dwellings during 1985-86, all of which were under the right-to-buy scheme implemented in the 1980 Housing Act, and 192 in the first nine months of 1986-87, of which 170 were right-to-buy sales.

Bournemouth

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have specifically benefited the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. Ridley: A full answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the following capital allocations and grant or subsidy payments have been made in respect of Bournemouth borough since 1979:

	£ '000
Capital allocations to the borough council (since 1981-82 when the present system came into effect)	45,900
Capital allocations to housing associations	2,700
Rate support grant (including domestic rate relief)	63,156
Housing subsidy payments to the borough council	19,000
Housing association grant payments	5,200
Listed building grants	75
Urban programme grants	5

Planning Applications

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide a right of appeal for objectors to planning applications; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide objectors with the right to seek a review of planning applications after they have been approved by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Development control procedures already provide adequate opportunity for considering objections to development proposals.

Noxious Emissions

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the target for reducing emissions from power stations of sulphur dioxide by 1993 and 1998, respectively; on what year's level those targets are based; what is the Government's policy on reduction of nitrogen oxide emissions from power stations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will outline the technological measures applied between 1970 and 1980 and between 1981 and 1987 at fossil fuel power stations operated by the Central Electricty Generating Board aimed specifically at reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides;

(3) if he will outline the technological measures applied between 1970 and 1980 and between 1981 and 1987 at fossil fuel power stations operated by the Central Electricty Generating Board aimed specifically at reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Inner Area Programme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions he has made regarding submissions made under the 1987-88 inner area programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: A total of 54 urban programme authorites have submitted inner area programmes to date, of which 20 have been approved.

Conservative Party Conference, 1985 (Policing)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent repesentations he has received on the rate support grant settlement for 1985-86 in relation to the policing costs for the 1985 Conservative party conference at Blackpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received representatives from Lancashire county council and from a number of hon. Members that he should disregard expenditure on policing the 1985 Conservative party conference in Blackpool. He considered these before he made the third rate support grant supplementary report for 1985-86 on 19 March 1987: he decided not to do so. He will reconsider the representations before making the next supplementary report for 1985-86.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what directions he has given to the London residuary body since its establishment.

Mr. Chope: A formal direction under the provisions of section 78(1) of the Local Government Act 1985 regarding the presentation of the statement of its accounts for 1985-86 was issued to the London residuary body on 26 July 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report from the London residuary body about the delay in determining the detriment payments to the 388 eligible staff from the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 23 March 1987 at column *62*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction to the London residuary body requiring it to give Three Rivers district council first refusal on Oxley playing fields.

Mr. Chope: No. I understand that negotiations between the London residuary body and the Three Rivers district council are in progress.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the practice in respect of offering to the authority within which it is located land currently held by the London residuary body outside the Greater London area before offers are sought; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This is a matter for the London residuary body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings have taken place in the past 12 months between officials of his Department and representatives of the London residuary body.

Mr. Chope: No central record is kept of meetings between officials of this Department and officers of the London residuary body, but it is estimated that some five to 10 meetings take place each month.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings have taken place in the past 12 months between Ministers and members of the London residuary body.

Mr. Chope: Ministers of this Department have had 18 meetings of a formal nature with members of the London residuary body since 1 May 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of sums still outstanding to the London residuary body in respect of all Government grants to the Greater London council.

Mr. Chope: There are outstanding entitlements to various Government grants in respect of the GLC's activities prior to abolition.

In the process of closing the GLC's 1985-86 accounts LRB has estimated the amounts of Government grants receivable. These entitlements and arrangements for payment are the subject of discussions between LRB and the respective Government Departments.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of the capital receipts cash entitlements made by the London residuary body to rating authorities by 31 March 1987.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Gentleman to table C of the answer I gave my hon. Friend, the Member for Ealing, North, (Mr. Greenway) on 23 February 1987 at columns *92-94*.

London Scientific Services

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in determining the level of staffing in respect of the London Scientific Services.

Mr. Chope: The level of staffing of the London Scientific Services is related to the level of demand. The present complement is 117.

GLC Chairman (Official Car)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of the present location of the Daimler motor vehicle registration GLC1 previously used by the chairman of the Greater London council.

Mr. Chope: The vehicle is at the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust collection in Coventry.

Middlesex and GLC (Badge of Office)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of the location of the badge of office previously used by the chairman of the Middlesex county council and the chairman of the Greater London council.

Mr. Chope: They are in secure storage within the care of the London residuary body.

Thames Barrier

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what payments are still outstanding in respect of contracts relating to the Thames barrier; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This information is not readily available. If the hon. Member has in mind any specific contractual issue he should contact either the London residuary body or the Thames water authority.

Government Vehicles (Parking Fines)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state *(a)* the total amount paid by his Department in 1986 in respect of parking fines incurred by ministerial vehicles and *(b)* provide a breakdown by Government Department in terms of offence, fine, date and location.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give details of consents sought by residuary bodies for disposal of land or buildings for less than the best price offered;

(2) if he will give details of all applications for the acquisition of land made to his Department by residuary bodies since their establishment.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of all applications to borrow money made to his Department by residuary bodies, and for what purposes.

Mr. Chope: The Department has received various inquiries from residuary bodies about the circumstances in which borrowing approval would be available. The following formal applications were made in 1986-87.

Body	*Purpose*	*Amount approved*
London	—	
Greater Manchester	Inherited capital liabilites for Central Station	£3,000,000
	Other inherited capital liabilities	£1,500,000
Merseyside	Staff compensation	No limit specified (approval has not been exercised)
	Recreating County Council cash book balances	No limit specified (up to £7,000,000 believed to have been borrowed)
	Refinancing County Council car loans	£300,000
	Other capital liabilities	Not approved
South Yorkshire	Staff compensation	£2,475,812
Tyne and Wear	Various inhertied capital liabilities	£2,550,000
West Midlands	—	
West Yorkshire	Staff compensation	No limit specified (approval has not been exercised)
	Various capital liabilities	Not approved

No formal applications have been made in 1987-88.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify the county halls currently awaiting disposal by residuary bodies following the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Chope: Residuary bodies are marketing their respective interests in the county halls for the former Greater London council, West Yorkshire county council, Greater Manchester county council, Merseyside county council, Tyne and Wear county council and West Midlands county council.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of additions and removals of residuary body members since their establishment after abolition of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Chope: Mr. Philip Carter was appointed to the Merseyside residuary body on 21 December 1986. There have been no other changes in the membership of the residuary bodies since the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of all directions issued to residuary bodies in respect of the recovery of sums from local authorities received in contravention of section 91 of and schedule 15 to the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Chope: No such directions have been issued.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of all directions issued by his Department to residuary bodies in respect of land and buildings.

Mr. Chope: None has been issued.

Local Authority Functions

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of possible changes in local authority functions currently being considered by his Department.

Mr. Chope: The Department keeps under review all local authority functions for which it is responsible. But, unless and until an announcement is made to the contrary, the House may assume that my right hon. Friend has no new proposals for change.

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he will publish the explanatory paper on the financial terms for the transfer of Thamesmead; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he now expects to make an announcement about the transfer of Thamesmead to Thamesmead Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Shortly.

Hampstead Heath

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to make an announcement on the future of Hampstead Heath; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I expect a final decision to be made in sufficient time to effect a smooth transfer of responsibility for the heath in the spring of 1988.

GLC (Mortgages)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the number of ex-Greater London Council mortgagors who refinanced their mortgages following the letter written by the London residuary body on 7 November 1986.

Mr. Chope: None.

London Research Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the future of the London research centre together with the Acompline and Urbaline databases.

Mr. Chope: I understand that the work of the London research centre is continuing under joint committees under section 88 of the Local Government Act 1985 and under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

London Marathon

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of all the assistance

being provided by his Department to the organisers of the 1987 London marathon; and what charges will be made for such services.

Mr. Tracey: The Government have given broad support and encouragement to the London marathon. This includes the use of a substantial part of Greenwich park and routes in St. James' park. No facility fee is charged for this use of the royal parks, although the Department requires the London marathon to reimburse the net costs of additional works and facilities provided specifically for the event.

London Skyline (Photogrametric Records)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment where the photogrametric records of London's skylines are now kept.

Mr. Chope: The records are with the London research centre.

GLC (Seaside and Country Homes)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to make an announcement about the future of the seaside and country homes previously owned by the Greater London council.

Mr. Chope: I hope that it will soon be possible to make an announcement.

Local Government Act 1985

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give details of the use of his powers exercised under sections 49, 62, 64 and 77 of the Local Government Act 1985;

(2) if he will give details of the money made available to the Trust for London in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Chope: The following orders have been made wholly or in part under the powers in sections 49, 62 and 77 of the Local Government Act 1985:

section 49: The Local Government Reorganisation (Capital Money) (Greater London) Order 1987; SI No. 118 1987

section 62: The Local Government Reorganisation (Croxteth Hall and Park) Order 1986; SI No. 573 1986

section 77: The Local Government Reorganisation (Capital Money) (Metropolitan Counties) Order 1986; SI No. 2063 1986

The Local Government Reorganisation (Capital Money) (West Midlands) Order 1986; SI No. 2093 1986

The Local Government Reorganisation (Capital Money) (Greater London) Order 1987; SI No. 118 1987

The powers in section 64 of the Act have not been exercised.

Article 5 of part III to SI No. 118 1987 provides that the London residuary body shall pay a grant of £10 million to the Trust for London in 1986-87. I understand that the money was paid to the City Parochial Foundation which administers the trust, in early March.

Newcroft Park, Stretford

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what instructions he has given to Trafford borough council about land in Newcroft park, Stretford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: On 15 December 1986 my right hon. Friend gave Trafford borough council notice, under section 99 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, of his intention to direct it to sell a 0·85 hectare piece of land it owns off Newcroft drive, Urmston. The council has made representations and these are being carefully considered. A decision will be announced in the near future.

LCC and GLC (Portraits)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has in respect of the whereabouts of the portraits of the first chairman of the London county council and the last chairman of the Greater London council.

Mr. Chope: They are in secure storage within the care of the London residuary body.

Radiochemical Inspectorate

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of staff employed by the radiochemical inspectorate annually since 1979 to 1987; and if he will give the projection for the next two years.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Town and Country Planning (Review)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the Government's review of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order.

Mr. Ridley: We are grateful to all those who commented on the proposals in our consultation paper last June on the revision of the order. I have today published a new order, which will come into force on 1 June. The order which extends to England and Wales, takes full account of all the views expressed to us.

Modernising the order will reduce the need for planning applications, but retain effective control over changes of use where that is needed because of their environmental consequences or relationship with other uses.

The major change in the modernised order will allow more flexible use of business premises. A new business class will be created by merging the present light industrial use class with office uses other than those which provide professional and financial services to customers who visit the premises; this will help commercial and industrial activities which at present straddle the boundary between two classes. In addition we have already clarified planning law to ensure that the subdivision of non-domestic premises does not constitute a change of use and does not require planning permission. These changes will give greater freedom to industry to undertake development and create jobs without endangering amenity.

The order retains the existing shops class and adds to it certain similar uses which are at present excluded. The order also contains two new classes: one comprises uses as shops selling hot food, restaurants, snack bars, cafes, public houses and similar establishments; the other comprises financial and professional services offered direct to the public visiting the premises. The creation of separate classes distinguishing between offices serving the public

and other offices should enable local planning authorities to grant permission more frequently for service uses in the knowledge that the order will not permit subsequent changes to uses that do not need to be in shopping areas. The hot food class should allow more flexible use of premises by the modern catering industry; it should not adversely influence consideration by local planning authorities of proposed changes of use from shops to fast foods restaurants, which can bring both vitality to the street scene and convenience to shoppers.

One change from the proposals published last June is the exclusion of theatres from the assembly and leisure class so as to ensure that all proposals for material change of use of live theatres would require planning permission.

The largest new class covers use as a dwellinghouse for various types of residential use. This class extends beyond use as a family dwellinghouse to small residential care homes and student accommodation where not more than six people live together as a single household. This will help to clarify the circumstances in which the planning system bears on our care in the community initiative. The order does not change the planning requirements when it is proposed to use part of a dwellinghouse for business purposes; planning permission is not usually needed if the overall character of its use as a residence would not be changed.

My Department and the Welsh Office have today published a circular giving advice about planning control and the change of use of property and explaining the operation of the new order.

Chernobyl Accident (Costs)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the overall cost to Her Majesty's Government to date of the Chernobyl accident in the following categories in England *(a)* farmers' compensation schemes, *(b)* additional equipment purchased for monitoring purposes, *(c)* additional staff time spent on radiation monitoring and administration of the compensation schemes for farmers and *(d)* additional staff time spent on informing the public on the accident and its effects.

Mr. Waldegrave: The overall cost to date to Her Majesty's Government in the wake of the Chernobyl accident of farmers' compensation schemes in England is £242,000. The cost of additional monitoring equipment is £175,000.

It is not possible to provide an answer to parts *(c)* and *(d)* because time and costs are not recorded in a suitable form.

Nature Conservancy Council

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the Nature Conservancy Council and its committees for England, Scotland and Wales including their chairmen, with their biographical details and their dates for reappointment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

Nature Conservancy Council (NCC)

Member	*Biographical Details*	*Expiry of Appointment*
William Wilkinson, *Chairman*	Ornithologist, Former merchant banker	31 March 1990
Professor John Allen Ph.D, DSc, FIBIOL FRSE	Professor of Marine Biology, University of London	31 March 1989
Lord Blakenham	Former Chairman of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Businessman and Farmer	31 March 1990
Professor David Bowen	Professor of Geography, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London	31 March 1989
Sir John Burnett MA, DPhil, DSc, LLD, FRCSE, FIBIOL, FRSE	Botanist. Principal and Vice-Chancellor University of Edinburgh	31 March 1989
John Cossins CBE	Farmer and Landowner. Former member of NFU Council	31 March 1989
Dr. Peter Evans MA, PLD, DPhil	Reader in Estuarine Ecology, University of Durham	31 March 1989
Sir Andrew Huxley OM FRS	Physiologist, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, President of Royal Society 1980-85	31 March 1989
Professor John Knill	Professor of Engineering Geology	31 March 1989
Miss Audrey Lees RIBA, FRTPI, FCIT, FRSA	Architect and Planner, Former Controller of Transportation and Development, GLC	31 March 1988
Lord Middleton MC, DL	Farmer. Past President Country Landowners Association	31 March 1989
Sir Hector Monro AE JP DL MP	Former Env. and Scottish Office Minister. Landowner	31 March 1988
Prof Gareth Owen BSc, DSc, MRIA, FIBIOL	Zoologist, Principal, University College of Wales	31 March 1988
Alexander Trotter	Estate Manager and Farmer, Former Convenor of Scottish Landowners' Federation	31 March 1989

NCC Committee for England

Member	*Biographical Details*	*Expiry of Appointment*
Miss Audrey Lees, *Chairman*	See above under details of Council Members	31 March 1990
Dr. G. R. Potts BSc, PhD	Director of Research, Game Conservancy	31 March 1989
Professor T O'Riordan FRSA	Professor of Environmental Sciences	31 May 1987
Dr. D. Shaw BSc, PhD	Pro-Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of Liverpool	31 March 1989
J. M. Stratton OBE	Farmer and Landowner	31 May 1987

Member	Biographical Details	Expiry of Appointment
James Teacher	Farmer and Landowner, Farmer member of Council of RSPB	31 March 1989
L. C. Troup	Former Conservator and Deputy Surveyor, Forestry Commission	31 May 1987

Several (re-)appointments to this Committee are currently under consideration.

NCC Committee for Scotland

Member	Biographical Details	Expiry of Appointment
Alexander Trotter, Chairman	See above under details of Council members	31 March 1989
J. M. S. Arnott	Vice-Chairman, Countryside Commission for Scotland, Executive Producer BBC Scotland	31 March 1990
R. W. G. Cameron	Architect and Planner, Director of Planning, Highland Regional Council	31 March 1989
J. C. Compton BSc	Farmer and Landowner, Council member, Scottish Landowners' Federation	31 March 1990
Professor P. S. Corbet DSc, ScD	Professor of Biology, University of Dundee	31 March 1990
Professor R. I. Currie CBE FRSE	Director/Secretary Marine Biological Association	31 March 1989
A. M. Farquharson	Landowner and Estate Manager	31 March 1990
J. L. Goodfellow	Farmer, Convener of Legal and Commercial Committee of NFU (Scotland)	31 March 1990
J. R. Johnstone	Businessman and Landowner	31 March 1990
Professor A. W. G. Manning DPhil FIBIOL FRSE	Professor of Natural History, University of Edinburgh	31 March 1989
Professor I. Parsons	Former lecturer, University of Aberdeen, Member NERC Geological Sciences Research Grants Committee	31 March 1989
Professor W. Ritchie BSc PhD FRSGS FRSE	Professor of Physical Geography	31 March 1989
John H. Scott	Farmer and Landowner, Deputy Lieutenant of Shetland	31 March 1989
Professor T. C. Smout	Head Department Scottish History, University of St. Andrews	31 March 1989
Miss V. M. Thom	Author and Consultant on interpretive planning. Former conservation officer Countryside Commission for Scotland	31 March 1989

NCC Committee for Wales

Member	Biographical Details	Expiry of Appointment
Professor Gareth Owen	See above under details of Council Members	31 March 1988
John Elias	Adviser Special Projects, Welsh Development Agency	31 March 1989
Dr. W. A. Evans	Biological Scientist, Headmaster, Queen Cambria School, Carmarthen	31 March 1989
Mrs. E. M. C. Foulkes BArch Dip CD RIBA	Architect, Member of Snowdonia National Park Committee	31 March 1990
J. M. Harrop	Farmer, Former member of Council of RSPB	31 May 1987
W. Roscoe Howells BSc PhD FIBIOL	Consultant in Pollution Control, Fisheries and Conservation	31 March 1989
Professor G. R. Sagar	Vice-Principal and Professor of Agricultural Botany University College of North Wales	31 March 1989
Professor D. Taylor Smith	Head, School of Ocean Sciences, University College of North Wales	31 March 1989

Countryside Commission

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the Countryside Commission, including the chairman, with biographical details and their dates for reappointment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

	Present Term Expires	Details
Sir Derek Barber (Chairman)	31 December 1989	Former Chairman of Council, RSPB; founder member of Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group; President, Gloucestershire Naturalists' Trust; environment consultant to Humberts, chartered surveyors.

	Present Term Expires	Details
Mr. Robin Dower	30 June 1988	Architect and landscape designer; former member of Northumberland National Park and Countryside Committee; Member of Hadrian's Wall Consultative Committee; Chairman of the Conservation Group on the Northern Council for Sport and Recreation.
Professor Bryn Green	30 June 1987	Professor of countryside management at Wye College; Member, Advisory Committee for England of NCC; Chairman, Conservation Policy Committee of BTCV; Vice-Chairman, Kent FWAG; Member, Council of the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation.
Mr. Antony Jarvis	30 June 1989	Farmer; Member of Game Conservancy, Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation, National Trust and CLA Lincs Committee; Vice-Chairman, British Christmas Tree Growers' Association.
Lady Kirk	30 June 1987	Farms small agricultural holding. Trustee and Executive Committee Member, Byways and Bridleways Trust; Chairman, North Essex Bridlepath Society; British Horse Society Bridleways Officer for Essex.
Mr. Gerard Morgan-Grenville	30 June 1989	Company Director; Author of books on travel; Founder and Chairman National Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynleth; Chairman, Urban Centre for Appropriate Technology; Vice-President, Ecoropa.
Mr. John Quicke CBE	30 June 1987	Farmer; former President, CLA; Chairman, Livestock Group, Agriculture EDC; Chairman Exeter Local Board of the Commercial Union Assurance Company.
Mrs. Dorothea Raikes OBE	30 June 1987	Farmer; former member, Welsh Water Authority (with particular responsibility for recreation, amenity and conservation); member of Brecknock Naturalists' Trust, RSPB; landscape painter.
Mr. Mark Schreiber	30 June 1989	Editorial staff of the Economist; lobby correspondent since 1976.
Mr. Meuric Rees	31 December 1989	Farmer; High Sheriff, Gwynedd County Council; Chairman, MAFF Hill Farming Committee; Member of CPRU, NFU, CLA and BBC Wales Advisory Board.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas where sections 53 and 54 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 have not been brought into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: These provisions are not in force in the counties of Cornwall, Cumbria, Staffordshire and the former east riding area of North Yorkshire, nor in the London boroughs of Bexley and Richmond upon Thames.

In these areas, the public are not yet able to apply to the surveying authority for an order, under section 53(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to modify the definitive map and statement but my Department is examining the feasibility of bringing section 53(5) into operation notwithstanding the continuing existence of a review under the previous provisions of the Countryside Act 1986.

Drinking Water

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by water supply district those parts of the United Kingdom in which drinking water supplied through the mains system or available through private supplies is below the pH range 6.5-8.5.

Mr. Waldgrave: I am not aware of any public water supplies in England where pH is below 6.5.

City of Westminster (Private Bill)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place between officials of his Department and Westminster city council in respect of the terms of the private Bill from that authority now before the House.

Mr. Chope: None directly, since the Bill concerns enforcement of the law, which is primarily a matter for the Home Office. The Department's officials have kept in close touch with Home Office officials and have joined in discussions with Home Office, Westminster city council and Metropolitan police officials about the provisions of the Bill.

Toad Tunnels

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to support the construction of further toad tunnels; and if he will make a statement about progress made so far.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am in favour of the construction of further toad tunnels where these can be justified; the first toad tunnel at Hambledon appears so far to have proved a success.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committee Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will give the number and length of reports issued by each Select Committee for each year since 1981.

Mr. Biffen: The information is as follows:

Committee and year	Total number of reports	Total number of printed pages
Agriculture		
1981	5	63
1982	3	64
1983	1	42
1984	5	41
1985	8	62
1986	2	21
1987	1	5
Armed Forces Bill		
1981	1	7
1986	1	11
Channel Tunnel Bill		
1986	1	45
Defence		
1981	5	49
1982	4	116
1983	4	62
1984	3	88
1985	9	102
1986	4	156
Education, Science and Arts		
1981	4	15
1982	8	301
1983	3	192
1984	2	38
1985	1	30
1986	3	284
1987	1	14
Employment		
1981	7	91
1982	10	33
1983	1	3
1984	4	19
1985	7	30
1986	4	37
1987	1	15
Energy		
1981	3	96
1982	8	123
1983	2	42
1984	16	150
1985	5	98
1986	7	60
1987	3	76
Environment		
1981	2	75
1982	3	105
1983	4	45
1984	9	127
1985	7	86
1986	8	277
1987	2	57
European Legislation		
1981	35	597
1982	29	507
1983	24	578
1984	30	823
1985	31	749
1986	31	743
1987[1]	12	209
Foreign Affairs		
1981	7	266
1982	6	183
1983	6	67
1984	6	219
1985	7	215
1986	6	227
1987	1	51
Home Affairs		
1981	5	191
1982	3	87
1983	3	90
1984	3	143
1985	5	90
1986	4	73
1987	2	20
House of Commons (Services)		
1981	2	12
1982	3	7
1983	2	18
1984	3	72
1985	4	26
1986	2	9
1987	1	7
Liaison		
1982	1	124
1985	1	64
1986	1	4
Member's Interests		
1984	3	5
1985	1	7
1986	3	7
Members' Salaries		
1981	1	2
1982	1	10
Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill		
1987	1	3
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration		
1981	2	28
1982	3	29
1983	1	3
1984	7	60
1985	2	30
1986	3	36
1987	2	9
Privileges		
1981	1	3
1982	1	1
1983	1	2
1984	1	4
1985	2	19
1986	1	5
Procedure (Supply)		
1981	1	28
Procedure (Finance)		
1983	1	49
Procedure		
1984	1	5
1985	5	35
1986	2	8
1987	1	7
Public Accounts		
1981	22	200
1982	27	190
1983	19	152
1984	31	239
1985	39	380

Committee and year	Total number of reports	Total number of printed pages
1986	48	419
1987	8	31
Scottish Affairs		
1981	6	108
1982	4	95
1983	2	21
1984	3	76
1985	4	91
1986	5	43
1987	1	34
Social Services		
1981	4	136
1982	3	161
1983	2	15
1984	4	265
1985	8	300
1986	7	140
1987	1	47
Sound Broadcasting		
1982	1	23
1983	1	4
1987	2	4
Standing Orders		
1986	1	1
Statutory Instruments (Joint Committee)		
1981	34	110
1982	34	98
1983	25	81
1984	33	102
1985	35	103
1986	34	99
1987	10	29
Statutory Instruments (Select Committee)		
1981	26	54
1982	24	50
1983	15	32
1984	3	8
1985	4	12
1986	6	15
1987	2	5
Trade and Industry		
1981	7	121
1982	12	125
1983	6	103
1984	9	111
1985	8	154
1986	5	68
1987	3	20
Transport		
1981	6	135
1982	6	224
1983	6	101
1984	4	150
1985	7	237
1986	6	121
1987	1	7
Treasury and Civil Service		
1981	9	212
1982	8	124
1983	7	175
1984	15	185
1985	13	140
1986	9	88
1987	4	65
Welsh Affairs		
1981	1	102
1982	1	26
1983	1	117
1984	1	29
1985	1	240
1986	1	27
1987	1	71

[1] Up to and including 17th Report.

Notes:

1. In addition, the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills published 17 reports in 1981, four reports in 1982, six reports in 1983, 11 reports in 1984, five reports in 1985 and five reports in 1986. It has published one report in 1987. All these reports were under one page in length.
2. The reply includes both reports and special reports.
3. "Number of pages" refers to the number of pages of text of the report plus any annexes.
4. Since November 1986 reports have been printed in A4 size pages. Earlier reports were printed in royal octavo.

ENERGY

Bournemouth

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those measures taken by his Department since 1979 which have benefited specifically the borough of Bournemouth.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government's approach to energy questions is necessarily a national one. However, consumers in Bournemouth have benefited from our determination to keep supplies flowing. The improved efficiency of the gas and electricity industries has meant that domestic prices have fallen in real terms since the last election, electricity by 12 per cent. on average and gas by 8 per cent.

Our energy efficiency campaign has been taken directly to Bournemouth, including a briefing when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy discussed with senior managers of locally based industry ways in which energy efficiency measures could benefit them.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy when the hon. Member for Leyton can expect to receive a reply to his question tabled for answer on 7 April concerning compensation claims from *(a)* leukaemia victims in the vicinity of nuclear installations where accidents involving radiation leaks have occurred and *(b)* nuclear power workers and their families and *(c)* others received by the Central Electricity Generating Board over the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 30 April at column *203*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Thames Barrier

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury on 27 April,

Official Report, column *24*, about the raising of the Thames barrier, he will indicate what the flooding risk to London was on Sunday 29 March; and what assessment he made of the risk involved in not raising the barrier.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Day-to-day assessment of the risk of flooding in London and consequent operational decisions are matters for the Thames water authority. I have previously listed for the hon. Member on 27 April at column *24* the climatic and tidal factors that led to the prediction that the noon high tide on 29 March would reach a level against which it would be prudent to have the protection of the barrier in place.

Farming (Retirement)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on measures encouraging retirement from farming within the EEC.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Acid Deposition

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been undertaken or commissioned by his Department into the bioaccumulation of metals in shellfish in estuaries as a result of acid deposition; and what were the findings.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Hedgehog Ladders

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what resources are made available by his Department for the construction of hedgehog ladders.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Fisheries Ministers meeting held in Brussels on 5 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: With my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels on 5 May. This was the first meeting of the Fisheries Council since the end of the British presidency.

The main business of this council meeting concerned the allocation of quotas between the Member States for the cod stocks at Spitzbergen and in north-west Atlantic waters subject to regulation by the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation. I am pleased to report that the Council approved by qualified majority a compromise proposal by the Commission which was very favourable to United Kingdom fishing interests. We were allocated for 1987 a quota of 2,700 tonnes of cod at Spitzbergen, which is well in excess of the United Kingdom catch in any year since 1978 and amounts to nearly 13 per cent. of the Community availability; the allocation for future years will be on a sliding scale which gives the United Kingdom over 22 per cent. of any increase in the Community availability over 1987 levels and this increases the total United Kingdom share as the stock improves. For cod in NAFO areas 2J, 3KL (the other main stocks of practical interest to the United Kingdom fishing industry), the compromise approved gave us 850 tonnes as compared with the Commission's original proposal of 700 tonnes.

In view of the urgent need for a decision on these quota allocations, both from the point of view of United Kingdom fishermen and in terms of the Community's international standing on fisheries matters, I judged it right to support the compromise decision in advance of completion of parliamentary scrutiny procedures in this country.

The Council approved a decision, in fulfilment of a commitment in the treaty of accession, to grant Portugal financial assistance in 1988 and 1989 up to a maximum of 12 mecu for the modernisation and improvement of her fisheries control and surveillance facilities, together with a further decision providing for similar assistance to other member states up to a maximum of 10 mecu in 1988 and 1989. Member states, including the United Kingdom, have until 30 September 1987 to submit their investment plans. I very much welcome this decision which should lead to an improvement in control arrangements throughout the Community.

Finally, under "other business", I raised with the Commission the need for urgent action to follow up, in consultation with Norway, any possibility for increasing the current total allowable catches for North sea cod and haddock in the light of revised scientific advice likely to emerge from the current meeting of the advisory committee on fisheries management of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. I was supported by a number of other member states and in turn supported a similar request by France in relation to cod in area VII. I am glad to report that the Commission undertook to follow up any such advice, if and when it emerges, with all urgency.

Sugar

Mr. Spearing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all forms of subsidy, assistance or other financial support available to the beet sugar industry and not available to cane sugar refineries.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 May 1987

ENVIRONMENT

Countryside Commission

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to make more resources available to the Countryside Commission to enable it to discharge more effectively its functions in relation to the enjoyment of the countryside by the public.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since 1979-80, we have increased the resources available to the Countryside Commission by 61 per cent. in real terms to enable them to fulfil effectively their statutory responsibilities, which include the promotion of recreation in the countryside. I expect to receive their corporate strategy, which will outline their plans for 1988-89 onwards, shortly and will consider their future resource requirements in that context.

Endangered Species

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to ensure that the European Community convention on international trade in endangered species regulations are being properly implemented in the United Kingdom and other European Community states.

Mr. Waldegrave: With the agreement of the EC member states, the wildlife trade monitoring unit of the IUCN conservation monitoring centre at Cambridge is currently carrying out an independent study for the European Commission of the implementation of the EC CITES regulations in each country of the Community. The United Kingdom will co-operate fully in this study and will shortly publish a report on the implementation of CITES in the United Kingdom to assist the conservation monitoring centre in their task. Copies of the report will be placed in the House Libraries when they are available.

National Parks Authorities

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the ministerial appointees on all the national park authorities and give their biographical details and their dates for reappointment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information in respect of the seven English national park authorities is as follows:

Dartmoor National Park Committee
Sir Charles Cave—1988
Landowner, Ex-President of CLA
Mr. S. Locke—1988
Director, South West Areas Museums Council
Mr. J. Turner—1988
Engineer, Member of Dartmoor Preservation Association
Mr. D. Powell—1989
Farmer
Mr. W. Scott—1989
Businessman-engineering
Mrs. F. Wilkinson—1990
Farmer
Mr. H. Williams—1990
Accountant

Exmoor National Park Committee
Mr. H. Malet—1988
Farmer
Mr. M. Scott—1988
Farmer
Mr. J. Workman—1988
Forestry advisor to National Trust
Mrs. K. Martin—1989
Former Chairman of SW Region of YHA
Mr. J. Roberts—1990
Director of West Country Tourist Board
Professor A. Straw—1990
Professor of Geography at University of Exeter
Mrs. R. Thomas—1990
College lecturer

Lake District Special Planning Board
Mrs. P. Walker—1988
Secretary of Windermere Civic Society
Mr. C. Barter—1988
Farmer
Mrs. K. Atkinson—1988
Member of RSPB, Works for Freshwater Biological Association
Mrs. J. Corlett—1989
Retired biologist, Chairman of Regional YHA
Mr. J. Baxter—1990
Principal at outdoor centre
Mr. P. Gordon-Duff-Pennington—1990
Landowner
Mr. G. Jackson—1990
Solicitor, Member of Friends of Lake District
Mrs. A. Hayton—1990
Farmer
Mr. A. Leeming—1990
Farmer and landowner
The Hon. R. Vane—1990
Landowner

Northumberland National Park and Countryside Committee
Professor G. Dickson—1988
Professsor of Agriculture at Newcastle University
Dr. A. Lunn—1988
Lecturer in geography and landscape at Newcastle University
Mr. J. Oliver—1988
Farmer
Mr. R. Spoor—1988
Accountant
Lord Vinson—1989
Farmer, Chairman of Development Commission
Mr. A. Tynan—1989
Curator, Hancock Museum
Dr. S. Linsley—1989
Lecturer in industrial archaeology at Newcastle University
Mr. I. Armstrong—1990
Regional Officer for RSPB
Mr. B. Hiley—1990
Retired senior retail manager

North York Moors National park Committee
Mrs. A. Cooper—1988
Conservation Officer—Cleveland Nature Conservation Trust
Mr. P. Fawcett—1988
Land agent
Mr. G. McGuire—1987
Retired Deputy Secretary, YHA
Mr. J. Sutcliffe—1988
Manager and partner of forestry and agricultural enterprise, Member of Civic Trust for North East
Mr. H. Ventress—1988
Farmer
Professor J. Patmore—1989
Professor of Geography—University of Hull

Mrs. B. Hood—1989
Secretary of local Ramblers Association
Viscount Downe—1990
Landowner and industrial manager
Mr. R. Pettigrew—1990
Educational advisor, Former President of British Mountaineering Council

Peak Park Joint Planning Board
Mrs. E. Andrews—1988
Runs a pony trekking establishment
Mr. K. Campbell—1988
Industrialist
Major-General P. Cavendish—1988
Retired Major General
Mr. C. Langford Mycock—1988
Farmer
Mr. L. Meadowcroft—1988
Retired Company Director, Ex-President of Manchester Area Ramblers Association
Mr. J. Cant—1989
YHA Warden and Warden Trainer
Mr. J. Elliott—1989
Farmer
Mrs. P. Mason—1990
President, Sheffield Association of University Women
Miss J. Robinson—1990
Deputy Head Teacher, Member of Ramblers Association
Mrs. J. Thornton—1990
Qualified teacher
Mr. M. Vallance—1990
Businessman, Former officer of Planning Board

Yorkshire Dales National Park Committee
Mr. L. Fallows—1988
Retired education advisor, Chairman, Friends of Dales Rail
Mr. H. Ramm—1988
Retired field investigator for Royal Commission on Historic Monuments
Miss M. Rooker—1988
Retired Polytechnic Librarian
Mr. J. Pearlman—1989
Hon. Solicitor to Ramblers' Association
Mr. D. Duffus—1990
Farmer
Dr. N. Roome—1990
Lecturer at University of Bradford, Secretary of West Yorkshire FWAG
Miss C. J. Hatcher—1990
Lecturer in history of architecture, Field worker for HBMC
Vacancy
All appointments expire on 31 March.

Appointments to the three Welsh national park authorities are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Conservation

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many reports have been submitted to him by the Countryside Commission during each of the past five years concerning the establishment of long-distance routes, under the provisions of section 51 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. The last such report, which concerned the Peddars way and North Norfolk coast path, was submitted on 27 August 1981 and approved on 8 October 1982. This route was officially opened on 8 July 1986. I understand, however, that the commission has two further reports in preparation.

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average time taken to deal with appeals under paragraph 4(1) of schedule 14 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and applications for directions under paragraph 3(2) of that schedule; and if he will take steps to reduce delays.

Mr. Waldegrave: The average time between receipt of appeal, or application for a direction and determination has been 100 and 34 weeks respectively. Steps have already been taken to reduce this by provision of extra staff in the division concerned.

Empty Properties

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many empty Government-owned properties have been licensed to local authorities or other agencies for use either temporarily or permanently for homeless families.

Mr. Tracey: No information is held centrally about such lettings.

Hedgehog Ladders

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is given by his Department on the construction of hedgehog ladders.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will answer this question shortly.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made in the last year to NIREX about the relative effectiveness and economies of deep disposal of low-level waste as against shallow tunnel disposal.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the cost of the legal actions initiated by NIREX to obtain and sustain access to the four sites considered for the dumping of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: NIREX estimates these costs as £50,000.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from NIREX concerning his decision to stop exploratory work of shallow-trench disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has had no representations from NIREX since the letter of 30 April from the chairman.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of the NIREX drilling and exploratory work on each of the four sites explored for the dumping of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: NIREX estimate that £10 million has been spent on drilling and exploratory work at the four sites, and that a further £4 million may be incurred at the sites on winding up, cancellation and reinstatement work.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total expenditure by *(a)* NIREX and *(b)* his Department in planning, considering, promoting and exploring shallow-trench disposal of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: NIREX estimates that its total expenditure has been £17 million, with the possibility of a further £4 million yet to be incurred. Comparable details of the Department's costs are not readily available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the cost of NIREX publicity, consultation and public relations on *(a)* each of the four sites considered for low-level nuclear waste and *(b)* in general in relation to shallow-trench disposal.

Mr. Waldegrave: NIREX estimate that £40,000 was spent at Bradwell, £310,000 at Elstow, and £200,000 at each of Fulbeck and South Killingholme. NIREX's total expenditure on publicity, consultation and public relations for shallow trench disposal has been £1·5 million.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the cost of the planning work done in his Department to assess the best practicable options for the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: The direct costs of the assessment of best practicable environmental options for the management of low and intermediate level solid radioactive wastes published in March 1986 was £200,000. But this built on earlier research on nuclear waste strategies funded by the Department since 1982, on which expenditure averaged £300,000 per year between 1982 and 1985.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the estimated costs of *(a)* shallow-trench disposal of low level nuclear waste on each of the four sites surveyed by NIREX and *(b)* deep disposal undersea methods; and if he will indicate any changes in these calculations between 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information about the estimated costs of shallow burial low-level waste is given in the letter of 30 April from the chairman of NIREX to my right hon. Friend. Work is continuing on undersea disposal methods, and details of costings will be published in due course.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the costs of the preliminary desk and geological work done by *(a)* NIREX and *(b)* his Department before the choice of the four sites for exploration as possible sites for the storage of low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: NIREX estimate the cost of their preliminary work was £1 million. Comparable figures for the Department's costs are not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify why the large cost differential between shallow-trench disposal and deep disposal of nuclear waste has disappeared.

Mr. Waldegrave: This was set out by the chairman of NIREX in his letter of 30 April, a copy of which is in the Library.

Defective Housing

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for one of the Ministers in his Department to receive a deputation on Wednesday 20 May from the residents of the Wimpey no fines dwellings in the Walsall borough to discuss the present state of their dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my letter to him of 9 April on the question of a deputation by residents from Blakenhall in Walsall. It is for Walsall borough council to determine its own priorities for the repair and improvement of its housing stock within the total resources available.

NIREX (Chairman)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the chairman of NIREX over the last month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is customary for my right hon. Friend to have meetings with the chairman of NIREX from time to time, one of which took place after the meeting of the NIREX board on 29 April.

WALES

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds voted for the purchase of specimens by the National Museum of Wales during 1986-87 were vired for other purposes; and if he will specify the sums and the purposes for which authority to vire was granted.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: £545,245, of which £456,166 was for salaries and general administrative expenditure including the costs of mounting the dinosaurs exhibition and £89,079 for capital works.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has given authority to the National Museum of Wales to vire funds voted for the purchase of specimens during 1987-88; and if he will specify the sums and the purposes for which the authority to vire was granted.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. There has been no request for virement.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will specify the departmental operating budgets of the curatorial departmemts of the National Museum of Wales in 1986-87; and those approved for 1987-88.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Decisions on departmental operating budgets are a matter for the National Museum within the total grant in aid allocation.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many new posts have been created in the National Museum of Wales since 1 February 1986 with the approval of his Department; and if he will specify them.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None requiring the approval of the Welsh Office.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether the report of the full independent inquiry into the conduct and management of the Department of Art of the National Museum of Wales has now been delivered; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The National Museum of Wales commissioned the inquiry into the conduct and management of the art department. Decisions about the dissemination of the report which has been received are therefore a matter for the museum authorities.

National Gallery of Wales

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken to give administrative autonomy to the National Gallery of Wales and a governing body; and if he will establish a separate grant in aid for its art purchases.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Careful consideration will be given to the future arrangements for the organisation and funding of the art department of the National Museum of Wales. No decisions have yet been reached.

Mid-Wales Development Board

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs have been lost, and how many created since June 1979 in the Mid-Wales Development Board catchment area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is not available in the form requested.

Drugs Education

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the latest developments regarding the drugs education programme in Welsh schools.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Responsibility for developing drugs education programmes in schools rests with the local education authorities. The Department has given assistance through the education support grants scheme to enable LEAs to appoint advisers to promote and co-ordinate activity aimed at preventing drug misuse. This funding amounts to £169,000 in 1987-88. All LEAs in Wales have benefited from this scheme. The education advisers work closely with county health education officers for drugs, who are also funded by the Department. In addition all LEAs in Wales have received copies of the joint Welsh Office/Department of Education and Science publication "Drug Misuse and the Young" and the Department has made available to all secondary schools a video package entitled "Double Take". The Department has also made grant of £127,000 available in 1987-88 for the in-service training of teachers in drug education.

Defective Housing

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state, in respect of the PRC dwellings and home owners, for each local authority in Wales *(a)* the number who have been assisted to date by local authority, by means of repurchase, *(b)* the average price paid for such repurchases, and *(c)* the minimum, maximum and average valuation, gross and net of discount, in respect of the original sale of these properties.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The number and average price of repurchases since 1984, for the 19 local authorities in which repurchase of PRC dwellings has occurred, are shown in the following table. Information on the original sale of repurchased dwellings is not collected centrally.

	Number of repurchases	*Average cost per dwelling* £
Alyn and Deeside	2	21,500
Arfon	2	18,500
Blaenau Gwent	4	17,500
Brecknock	17	23,300
Cardiff	3	19,000
Carmarthen	2	18,000
Delyn	1	16,000
Glyndwr	1	16,000
Islwyn	1	9,000
Meirionydd	1	14,000
Monmouth	1	18,300
Newport	1	15,000
Ogwr	2	14,000
Preseli	5	18,600
Radnor	2	17,000
Rhymney Valley	6	9,700
South Pembrokeshire	1	14,000
Swansea	3	12,000
Vale of Glamorgan	5	21,000
Wales	76	18,300

Consultants (Cover)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the policy in the Gwynedd health authority area on covering consultants' sessions where the consultant is away ill or on holiday; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This is an operational matter for the Gwynedd health authority.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had any representations about the length of hours worked by junior hospital doctors in Gwynedd.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No such representations have been received.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the average hours worked by junior hospital doctors in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Gwynedd; and how the average has varied over the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Ambulance Service

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average response time for ambulances answering emergency calls; and what is the percentage of response times taking 20 minutes or more for the counties of *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Gwynedd for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Recommended response times for ambulances answering emergency calls are based on eight minutes for the 50 percentile and 20 minutes for the 95 percentile. The 50 percentile may be taken as the median of the total number of calls. Figures for the last five years in Clwyd and Gwynedd are as follows:

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
			(in minutes)		
Clwyd					
50 percentile	7	8	8	8	6
95 percentile	16	18	17	16	17
Gwynedd					
50 percentile	8	8	7	7	7
95 percentile	20	20	20	19	20

The percentage of calls in which the response time was more than 20 minutes are as follows:

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Clwyd	3	3	2	3	3
Gwynedd	5	5	5	4	5

ENERGY

Oil and Gas Development

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he will publish his next report on oil and gas development in the United Kingdom, the Brown Book.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have today published the latest edition of the Brown Book, and have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House and the Vote Office stores. The report gives a detailed account of oil and gas development in 1986.

North Sea Oil

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the most recent figures available to him of the numbers of personnel working offshore on the United Kingdom continental shelf; how many are *(a)* United Kingdom nationals, *(b)* European Economic Community nationals other than United Kingdom, *(c)* United States nationals and *(d)* others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1987, c. *568*]: I regret that, due to an error of transcription, the number of "Others" offshore on fixed installations was overstated. The correct figure is 64, and the total for the column should accordingly be amended to 6,360.

EMPLOYMENT

Avon and Wansdyke

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Paymaster General (1) what was the percentage change in unemployment in *(a)* Avon and *(b)* Wansdyke constituency between January 1986 and January 1987 for those people without a job for more than three years;

(2) what was the percentage change in unemployment in *(a)* Avon and *(b)* Wansdyke constituency between January 1986 and January 1987.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The comparison of unemployment between 9 January 1986 and 8 January 1987 is affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1987. The table shows the published number of claimants in the county of Avon and the Wansdyke constituency on the two dates, and the numbers who had been unemployed for over three years.

	Unemployed claimants			
	Total		Over 3 years	
	January 1986	January 1987	January 1986	January 1987
Avon	48,318	45,109	6,455	6,821
Wansdyke constituency	3,162	3,057	336	346

Radio Frequency Equipment

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Paymaster General what warnings have been given to the public about the danger to health of radio frequency equipment; what screening safeguards are required; and what are the maximum levels of radiation for such equipment permissible in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: Radio transmission equipment has not been shown to create a danger to the health of the public such as to require public warnings. Operators are advised by the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of Trade and Industry to follow Medical Research Council recommendations on safe levels of exposure. These include a power density limit for continuous exposure of 10mW/cm² for the frequency range 30 to 30,000MH_3. This may require the prevention of public access to some radio frequency transmitting areas, with fencing and notices to keep out.

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to ensure that radio frequency and microwave safety levels are enforceable by law.

Mr. Trippier: There is no legislation requiring specific safety levels for radio frequency or microwave radiation. The general provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 require any health and safety risks from such radiation, should they arise, to be contolled so far as is reasonably practicable. Operators are advised by the Health and Safety Executive to follow Medical Research Council recommendations on limiting exposure. Domestic electrical appliances such as microwave ovens are covered by regulations made under the Consumer Protection Act 1961. Under these regulations, the sale of appliances leaking harmful levels of radiation is not permitted. The safety limit used for this purpose is set out in British Standard BS5175:1976.

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Paymaster General if he will set out in the *Official Report* such information as he has as to the minimum requirements for safeguarding health from the dangers of radio frequency and microwave equipment in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Trippier: In the United Kingdom, the Medical Research Council have recommended a power density limit for continuous exposure of 10 mW/cm² for the frequency range 30 to 30,000MH_3. The most recent information available on requirements in the United States of America and the Soviet Union are contained in a paper published in July 1986 in the *Applied Industrial Hygiene* journal, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish figures on the proportion of part-time females paid below £3·20 and £3·40 an hour in April 1986, for all

agreements, industries, occupations and age groups, as listed in tables 171, 172, 173 and 174, respectively, of the new earnings survey, 1986, part F.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am sending the hon. Member the information requested, which is also available in the Library.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish figures from the 1985 labour force survey showing the percentages of employees aged 16 years and over, by sex, usual hours worked per week and, in the case of women, marital status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The 1985 labour force survey estimates are shown in the table:

Employees by basic[1] usual hours work per week
Great Britain Spring 1985

Hours	Men Per cent.	Married women Per cent.	[2]Other women Per cent.	All persons Per cent.
0-8	1·2	8·4	7·5	4·2
9-16	1·1	18·1	6·3	6·9
17-24	1·0	19·0	5·8	7·0
25-30	2·4	12·2	6·6	5·9
31-34	1·2	3·1	3·0	2·0
35-40	76·8	36·4	65·7	63·3
41-44	5·0	0·9	2·3	3·4
45-50	6·4	0·9	1·8	4·1
51-60	2·7	0·3	0·6	1·7
61 or more	1·7	0·5	0·2	1·1
All hours[3]	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Total number of employees (thousands)	11,572	6,060	2,997	20,629

[1] ie excluding meal breaks and paid and unpaid overtime.
[2] widowed, divorced, legally separated or single.
[3] includes those who did not state number of hours worked.

Mr. Mates asked the Paymaster General what is the present level of recorded unemployment and the number of reported job vacancies in the constituency of East Hampshire.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 12 March 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the East Hampshire parliamentary constituency was 2,356. Vacancy figures are not collected separately for the Fleet jobcentre, which covers an area similar to the East Hampshire constituency. However, these figures are included in those for Aldershot jobcentre, where there were 662 unfilled vacancies, excluding vacancies on Government schemes, on 6 March 1987.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish figures from the 1985 labour force survey, showing separately for full-time and part-time workers, the percentages of employees aged 16 years and over by sex, age group, and in the case of women, marital status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The 1985 labour force survey estimates are as shown in the table:

Employees by whether full[1] or part-time[2] and age
Great Britain Spring 1985

Age	Full-time Men Per cent.	Full-time Married Women Per cent.	Full-time [3]Other Women Per cent.	Part-time Men Per cent.	Part-time Married Women Per cent.	Part-time [3]Other Women Per cent.
16-19	5·9	0·8	24·6	25·6	[4]—	32·3
20-24	13·7	14·6	33·9	8·5	3·1	11·6
25-29	12·7	15·8	11·7	6·5	8·1	5·9
30-34	12·0	9·7	5·4	7·4	12·8	6·1
35-39	13·0	12·6	4·6	7·5	18·9	7·9
40-44	10·6	13·0	4·7	5·4	16·1	5·1
45-49	9·6	12·7	4·6	5·4	14·1	6·0
50-54	8·9	11·2	4·4	6·1	11·7	6·6
55-59	8·1	7·6	4·4	4·8	9·5	7·5
60-64	5·1	1·7	1·4	6·7	3·8	5·5
65-69	0·3	[4]—	[4]—	7·9	1·1	2·8
70 and over	0·1	[4]—	[4]—	8·3	0·4	2·7
All ages	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number of employees ('000s)	10,853	2,549	2,207	663	3,498	782

[1] Basic usual hours (ie excluding meal breaks and paid and unpaid overtime) of 31 or more per week.
[2] Basic usual hours of 30 or less per week.
[3] Widowed, divorced, legally separated or single.
[4] Sample size too small to provide a reliable estimate.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the numbers employed in each parliamentary constituency in 1984, on the basis of his results from the labour force survey, showing for each constituency the gains and losses in employees since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to the reply*]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of Tuesday 5 May 1987, at column *332*.

YTS

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General whether he has any information as to the number or percentage of young people who found work following the successful completion of youth training schemes in Leicester and in the east midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The latest available figures show that around 1,800 young people completed their entitlement to YTS in Leicester during the period April 1986 to September 1986 and were in work three months later; this represents around 83 per cent. of all those who completed YTS in the period. The comparable figures for the Manpower Services Commission's east midlands and eastern region are around 8,300 young people and 76 per cent. respectively.

These figures clearly demonstrate that very many young people are benefiting from the opportunities available under YTS.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently on youth training schemes in Leicester and in the east midlands ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: On 31 March 1987 there were around 7,100 young people in training on YTS schemes in the local authority district of Leicester; the comparable figure for the Manpower Services Commission's east midlands and eastern region was around 36,200.

These figures clearly show that the young people of Leicester and the east midlands recognise that YTS offers quality training and work experience in their transition from school to work.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General how many people have completed youth training schemes in Leicester and the east midlands to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: By the end of March 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, around 7,600 young people in the local authority district of Leicester and 69,000 in the east midlands and eastern region had completed YTS schemes since the scheme was introduced in April 1983.

I am confident that the success of YTS in the east midlands as in other parts of the country will provide a secure base from which young people will be able to build a better future. For the first time in this country we have a high-quality training scheme for all 16 and 17-year-old school leavers. This will be of benefit not only to young people but to British industry, which will gain from a better trained, more flexible young work force.

Job Creation

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the numbers of unemployed people who have benefited from the Government's employment measures since May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give a precise number. Certain of the schemes benefit both the employed and the unemployed. However, since May 1979, over 6·5 million people have benefited from the employment, training and enterprise measures run by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission.

TRANSPORT

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what he defines as a quiet aircraft; and if he will issue up-to-date noise footprints for these aircraft.

Mr. David Mitchell: Aircraft on the United Kingdom register which do not meet the basic noise standards of chapter 2 to annex 16 to the convention on international civil aviation have been banned from operating in this country since 1 January 1986. Such aircraft on foreign registers will be banned from 1 January 1988.

The Department does not define quiet aircraft as such. For the purposes of night restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, the Department define a category of "quieter" aircraft: those with a 95 PNdB noise footprint not exceeding four square miles on take-off and 2¼ square miles on landing. To be allowed to operate planned movements at night at these airports, an aircraft must be classed as "quieter". All non-jet aircraft with one or two engines are exempt from the night restrictions; all those with more than two engines meet the criteria. We are considering including 95 PNdB footprint diagrams of representative aircraft types in a future consultation document on night restrictions.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend aircraft noise control limits to include non-jet aircraft and noise from aircraft landing.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. Most noise near airports is made by jet aircraft taking off. Noise limits will continue to be applied to such aircraft at Heathrow and Gatwick. In addition, we will continue to encourage pilots to use operational procedures to reduce noise on both landing and take-off.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the effect to which the noise climate at Gatwick has changed as expressed by the noise contours for 1986 and 1985; what information he has as to the reasons for this; and if there has been any improvement between 1985 and 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: The area within the 35 noise and number index contour, which is generally taken to indicate the onset of disturbance, was 225 sq km in 1984, 299 sq km in 1985 and 288 sq km in 1986. The factors affecting the area are: extra aircraft movements, increasing use of the BAC1-11, and the shape of the noise contours themselves. It is unlikely that any particular place will have experienced an increase of more than 2 or 3 NNI.

Bypasses and Road Schemes

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses and road schemes have been completed since 1979; and when he expects the Bedford bypass to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 199 national road schemes have been completed since 1979, of which 67 are bypasses or relief roads. Subject to the completion of the outstanding procedures and the availability of resources, the A428 Bedford bypass could be completed towards the end of 1993.

Pacer Units

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column 9 on pacer units, he will publish the information he received from British Rail at the time British Rail placed its orders for pacer units.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government do not receive information from BR when it places its rolling stock orders. We receive information in support of BR's

investment submissions, but for reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not the practice to make this information public. As I explained in my earlier answer to the hon. Gentleman, questions on the reliability of the pacer units are the responsibility for the British Railways board and the manufacturers.

Underground (Escalator Repairs)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the times taken by London Regional Transport to repair broken escalators in the underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans to do so. Responsibility for the efficient day-to-day operation of the underground rests with London Underground, which has a substantial maintenance and repair programme for escalators.

Manchester Airport Rail Link

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on recent developments in regard to the Manchester airport rail link.

Mr. David Mitchell: Further to the reply which I gave the hon. Gentleman on 1 April, officials had a constructive meeting on 8 April to discuss the PTA's application for a section 56 grant. The PTA has agreed that further work needs to be done before the case for the investment can properly be assessed. I understand it is hoping to complete that work within the next few weeks.

Time Saving and Accident Prevention (Report)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has reached a decision on the proposals contained in the report, "Values for Journey Time Savings and Accident Prevention"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When I published the report in March, I promised to consult experts in transport appraisal and others before deciding on the final values for time and accident costs that are to be used in the economic appraisals of transport policy, projects and operations. The consultation period ended on 21 April. We are most grateful to all those who responded to our request for comments.

The balance of responses gave strong support for the recommendations for substantial increases to the values for journey time savings and accident prevention in the report. Respondents confirmed our view that the recent research into travel time savings provided a sound basis for increasing the values of time.

The main criticisms of the report concerned the proposed increases in casualty costs. Several respondents argued that there was adequate evidence to justify much higher values than those we propose. In 1980, we commissioned a study into how much people are willing to pay to reduce their risks of death or injury in road accidents. The research was of high quality, but like the other available research evidence it threw up both theoretical and practical problems. Interest has now been expressed in publication of the report of this study and we are considering this.

A recent comprehensive and wide ranging interdepartmental review of road safety, which we expect to publish shortly, also had serious reservations about the available evidence on road casualty costs. After considering all the comments on this issue very carefully we decided that the best course was to retain the values proposed—which maintain the weight of safety vis-a-vis mobility—until we have had an opportunity to consider further the recommendations of the interdepartmental review.

Another criticism was that the provision of separate values of time for retired people and children was contrary to the principle of a single appraisal value and that this may lead to inequities of investment between regions, particularly where local concentrations of retired people or children exist. It is our view that there will be very few circumstances where it would be appropriate to depart from the use of the single standard appraisal value. The use of separate values for pensioners, children and working age adults should only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

I have placed in the Library details of the new values of non-working time and casualty costs which—in the light of the proposals in the report and the comments received on it — we have decided to adopt. The Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Northern Ireland and for Wales have also decided to use the new values in transport investment decisions in their countries thus preserving a consistent approach throughout the United Kingdom.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Credit

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the credit industry about measures to reduce the level of personal over-indebtedness through the use of existing credit reference bureaux; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department is in regular contact with the main commercial lenders about a wide range of consumer credit issues including consumer overindebtedness. I am encouraged that lenders are making greater use of the services offered by credit reference agencies to aid them in their commercial assessment of the credit worthiness of credit applicants, which in turn should help to minimise consumer over-indebtedness.

Mr. Porter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to require the credit industry to offer borrowers payment protection insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to introduce such legislation. I accept that payment protection insurance schemes can be of value in helping to minimise the risk of over-indebtedness, provided that they offer adequate protection, but they involve extra cost and consumers should be able to choose whether or not to participate.

Mr. Porter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has about the latest incidence of personal over-indebtedness; if he will finance an extension of the services of trading standards officers to provide consumers with professional financial advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The definition of over-indebtedness depends on a range of individual circumstances and it is impossible reliably to estimate its total extent. However,

Government statistics on the total financial liabilities of individuals are available, and for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available, these rose by 16 per cent. Over the same period, the financial assets of individuals rose by 17 per cent. The trading standards service is funded through the rate support grant to enforce a wide range of statutory consumer protection duties. It is for local authorities to make the necessary arrangements and to allocate resources as they see fit. Information and advice to the public on a wide range of matters including consumer and financial problems is available from citizens advice bureaux. My Department provides funds, through grant in aid, to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

False Origin Marks

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation making it an offence to import into the United Kingdom goods known to the importer to bear a false indication of origin.

Mr. Howard: Section 16 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, which is enforced by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, already prohibits the importation of any goods to which a false indication of their place of manufacture has been applied outside the United Kingdom. It is an offence under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 for a person to import any goods contrary to such a prohibition under any enactment with intent to evade that prohibition.

House of Fraser (Investigation)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who are the inspectors appointed under the Companies Act to investigate the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of shares in House of Fraser during 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Howard: The inspectors are Mr. Philip Heslop QC and Mr. Hugh Aldous FCA. They were appointed under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs of House of Fraser Holdings plc and they have been asked to look in particular at the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of shares in House of Fraser plc in 1984 and 1985.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mental Illness

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will amalgamate the tables analysing figures for places for mentally ill people in local authority day centres and National Health Service day hospitals so as to show what day care provision is available to such people by *(a)* district health authority and *(b)* local authority.

Mr. Currie: The amalgamated tables requested are not readily available because not all district health authority areas are conterminous with local authority areas: a list of conterminous areas was provided in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) on 9 June 1986 at columns *99-104*.

Information on the number of places in local authority day centres solely for mentally ill people, analysed by local authority is published in "Day centres for the Mentally Ill, the Elderly and the Younger Physically Handicapped at 31 March 1985, England", copies of which have been placed in the Library. Information collected centrally does not separately identify places for mentally ill people in day centres which cater for mixed client groups but it is planned to collect such detail in future.

Figures for the number of places for mentally ill people in National Health Service day hospitals in England by district health authority as at 31 December 1985 are given in the table.

Places allocated for mentally ill people in NHS day hospitals: England on 31 December 1985

District health authority	*Number*
Northern RHA	1,069
Hartlepool	0
North Tees	0
South Tees	160
East Cumbria	33
South Cumbria	9
West Cumbria	40
Darlington	0
Durham	100
North West Durham	0
South West Durham	67
Northumberland	199
Gateshead	60
Newcastle	284
North Tyneside	—
South Tyneside	25
Sunderland	92
Yorkshire RHA	1,186
Hull	60
East Yorkshire	73
Grimsby	45
Scunthorpe	60
Northallerton	—
York	60
Scarborough	0
Harrogate	65
Bradford	147
Airedale	112
Calderdale	160
Huddersfield	60
Dewsbury	60
Leeds Western	124
Leeds Eastern	50
Wakefield	80
Pontefract	30
Trent RHA	1,700
North Derbyshire	80
Southern Derbyshire	85
Leicestershire	357
North Lincolnshire	30
South Lincolnshire	100
Bassetlaw	80
Central Nottinghamshire	45
Nottingham	420
Barnsley	38
Doncaster	210
Rotherham	48
Sheffield	207
East Anglian RHA	434
Cambridge	117
Peterborough	30
West Suffolk	60
East Suffolk	157
Norwich	70
Great Yarmouth	0
West Norfolk and Wisbech	0
Huntingdon	—
North West Thames RHA	1,278
North Bedfordshire	80
South Bedfordshire	50
North Hertfordshire	40
East Hertfordshire	60
North West Hertfordshire	61
South West Hertfordshire	55
Barnet	144
Harrow	140
Hillingdon	18
Hounslow and Spelthorne	137
Ealing	45
Brent	41
Paddington and North Kensington	200
Riverside	207
North East Thames RHA	1,487
Basildon and Thurrock	130
Mid Essex	—
North East Essex	135
West Essex	160
Southend	136
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	79
Hampstead	139
Bloomsbury	161
Islington	50
City and Hackney	47
Newham	80
Tower Hamlets	31
Enfield	136
Haringey	87
Redbridge	6
Waltham Forest	110
South East Thames RHA	1,051
Brighton	121
Eastbourne	30
Hastings	25
South East Kent	40
Canterbury and Thanet	136
Dartford and Gravesham	99
Maidstone	24
Medway	82
Tunbridge Wells	16
Bexley	54
Greenwich	70
Bromley	55
West Lambeth	114
Camberwell	105
Lewisham and North Southwark	80

District health authority	Number
South West Thames RHA	1,279
North West Surrey	192
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	210
South West Surrey	82
Mid Surrey	84
East Surrey	160
Chichester	45
Mid Downs	55
Worthing District	30
Croydon	136
Kingston and Esher	20
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	45
Wandsworth	100
Merton and Sutton	100
Wessex RHA	1,031
East Dorset	155
West Dorset	163
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	260
Southampton and South West Hampshire	160
Winchester	85
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	48
Salisbury	57
Swindon	0
Bath District	38
Isle of Wight	65
Oxford RHA	613
East Berkshire	165
West Berkshire	116
Aylesbury Vale	50
Wycombe	40
Milton Keynes	18
Kettering	122
Northampton	72
Oxfordshire	30
South Western RHA	1,048
Bristol and Weston	105
Frenchay	215
Southmead	84
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	64
Exeter	68
North Devon	30
Plymouth	120
Torbay	0
Cheltenham and District	—
Gloucester	226
Somerset	136
West Midlands RHA	2,089
Bromsgrove and Redditch	250
Herefordshire	62
Kidderminster and District	100
Worcester and District	250
Shropshire	177
Mid Staffordshire	100
North Staffordshire	60
South East Staffordshire	155
Rugby	—
North Warwickshire	0
South Warwickshire	50
Central Birmingham	49
East Birmingham	—
North Birmingham	120
South Birmingham	105
West Birmingham	300
Coventry	70
Dudley	40
Sandwell	—
Solihull	94
Walsall	50
Wolverhampton	57
Mersey RHA	876
Chester	30
Crewe	106
Halton	0
Macclesfield	120
Warrington	25
Liverpool Central Southern Sector	90
Liverpool Eastern Sector	50
St. Helens and Knowsley	160
Southport and Formby	30
South Sefton	90
Wirral	175
North Western RHA	2,601
Lancaster	44
Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde	285
Preston	140
Blackburn, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley	170
Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale	129
West Lancashire	130
Chorley & South Ribble	90
Bolton	104
Bury	80
North Manchester	290
Central Manchester	132
South Manchester	220
Oldham	142
Rochdale	0
Salford	125
Stockport	100
Tameside & Glossop	156
Trafford	20
Wigan	244
Special RHA	145
Great Ormond Street	10
Bethlem Royal & Maudsley	135

Notes:
"0" denotes no day hospital facilities available for the mentally ill.
"—" denotes no mental illness hospital or unit in area of Authority.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied, in the light of the number of patients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia readmitted to hospital in 1985, that appropriate support facilities were available for these patients after initial discharge and that clinicians had confirmed their availability before discharge.

Mrs. Currie: Many patients with schizophrenia have periods of good health interrupted by recurrent attacks. For this reason it is always likely to be the case that the number of admissions over a patient's lifetime — and therefore the ratio of readmissions to first admissions nationally—is higher with schizophrenia than with most other mental illnesses. We accept that good quality support to the patient when at home can reduce the number of recurrences. Research studies have shown that in many places the quality of support is patchy and we shall not be satisfied until we know that good support is on offer everywhere. In particular we have been emphasising the importance of the professional team agreeing an individual care plan with the patient and carers at the time of discharge.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the level of organ transplants in the United Kingdom and other comparable countries.

Mrs. Currie: According to information supplied by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of organ transplant operations performed in the United Kingdom during 1986 was as follows:

	Number
Kidney (cadaveric donors for NHS-entitled patients only)	[1]1,493
Heart	176
Heart/Lung	51
Liver	127

[1] As notified to date.

Provisional information on the number of heart, heart/lung and liver transplant operations performed in Austria, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands during 1986 has been provided by Eurotransplant and is as follows:

	Heart	*Heart/Lung*	*Liver*
Austria	32	3	[1]30
Belgium	[2]37	—	51
Germany	161	1	105
Netherlands	24	—	14

[1] Includes 1 liver/kidney transplant.
[2] Includes 1 heart/kidney transplant.

Figures for the number of kidney transplant operations performed in other countries are not yet available for 1986. 1985 statistics have been made available by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association. These figures include living donor transplants and private operations and are therefore higher than those provided by UKTS for the United Kingdom. For selected European countries, 1985 information is as follows:

	Total kidney transplants	*Patients treated per million population*
Austria	229	18·9
Belgium	290	29·4
Federal Republic of Germany	1,274	20·8
France	1,157	21·0
Netherlands	323	22·4
United Kingdom	1,549	27·5

For information on a more complete list of countries, my hon. Friend may wish to write to the EDTA at St. Thomas's hospital, London SE1.

Rugby DHA

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the budget of the Rugby district health authority *(a)* in 1986 and *(b)* in the first year since its inception; and how many staff were employed in each of those years.

Mrs. Currie: Financial allocations to individual health authorities are matters for the regional health authority. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority for this information. Staff in post figures, as at 30 September for the years 1982 and 1985 are shown in the table. I regret that staffing information for 1986 is not yet available centrally to this level of detail. Because of the 1982 National Health Service reorganisation, information for years prior to 1982 would not be comparable with that for 1985.

NHS directly employed staff in post in Rugby DHA[1][2]

At 30 September	*Whole time equivalent*
1982	820
1985	840

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.
[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.
[2] Includes agency staff and locums.
Excludes Medical and Dental Consultants and Senior Registrars.

"Preventive Care for Pre-school Children"

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the booklet "Preventive Care for Pre-School Children"; and what action he has taken.

Mrs. Currie: Since this handbook was published in 1974 by the British Medical Association and the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Department has made available to and discussed with them views received from the relevant professional bodies. I understand that production of a second edition is underway, and I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library when published.

Health Promotion Teams

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the district health authorities which have health promotion teams or units and those which include general practitioners on these teams.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that only four district health authorities out of 191 are currently without a health education unit. These are: Bassetlaw, Leeds Western and Waltham Forest, which at present rely on services provided by health education units in neighbouring authorities, and Somerset, which has part-time cover. No information is collected centrally on the membership of health promotion teams, but we estimate that, whereas about 250 health education officers were employed by district health authorities and regional health authorities in 1979, the current number is over 600.

Health Education Authority

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) to what extent information and publicity material formerly made available by the Health Education Council to community health councils and other local units will continue to be provided by the Health Education Authority; and what will be the effect of the change upon such work;

(2) what resources it is intended that the Health Education Authority will make available for the work of local health education units.

Mrs. Currie: The Health Education Authority will be responsible for production and distribution of its own

material but may continue to distribute material produced by the Health Education Council. Local health education units will continue to receive free supplies of publications, posters and other material from the authority. As the new authority is an integral part of the National Health Service, liaison arrangements and links with bodies in the Health Service involved with health education are expected to improve. The funding of local health education units is a matter for the local health authorities.

Press Release (In-patients)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of copies of DHSS press release 87/153, figures on National Health Service acute in-patient activity, sent out and the number of copies of the statistical bulletin referred to in the press release which were sent to *(a)* members of the press at the same time as the press release and *(b)* in response to subsequent requests from the press.

Mrs. Currie: The Department issued 300 copies of press release 87/153 to the media. Of these, 110 copies, sent to national media offices and the Press Gallery of the House, were accompanied by the statistical bulletin. About 10 further copies of the bulletin were provided to journalists who subsequently requested them; there is no record of the exact number.

Statistical Bulletins

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each of the statistical bulletins published by his Department, the title, date, number of copies printed and number of copies distributed free of charge to *(a)* Government and National Health Service users and *(b)* press and the numbers sold so far.

Mrs. Currie: The information is as follows. The sales figures are the numbers sold up to 30 April 1987.

Statistical Bulletin No. 1/84	
Title:	NHS hospital activity statistics for England 1972-82
Date published:	April 1984
Number of copies printed:	500
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	300 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	50 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	142
Statistical Bulletin No. 2/84	
Title:	NHS hospital activity statistics for England 1973-83
Date published:	November 1984
Number of copies printed:	500
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	250 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	50 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	171
Statistical Bulletin No. 1/85	
Title:	Mental illness hospitals and units in England: Results from the Mental Health Enquiry 1983.
Date published:	March 1985
Number of copies printed:	505
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	140 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	60 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	176
Statistical Bulletin No. 2/85	
Title:	Mental handicap hospitals and units in England: Results from the Mental Health Enquiry 1983
Date published:	March 1985
Number of copies printed:	425
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	240 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	60 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	162
Statistical Bulletin No. 3/85	
Title:	New cases of sexually transmitted diseases seen at NHS clinics in England 1973-1983.
Date published:	May 1985
Number of copies printed:	610
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	200 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	50 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	166
Statistical Bulletin No. 4/85	
Title:	Mental illness hospitals and units in England: Drug misuse statistics 1979-83.
Date published:	August 1985
Number of copies printed:	500
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	150 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	150 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	131
Statistical Bulletin No. 5/85	
Title:	NHS hospital activity statistics for England 1974-1984
Date published:	September 1985
Number of copies printed:	500
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	300 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	50 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	142
Statistical Bulletin No. 6/85	
Title:	Mental illness hospitals and units in England: Results from the Mental Health Enquiry 1984.
Date published:	December 1985
Number of copies printed:	550
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	150 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	150 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	79
Statistical Bulletin No. 7/85	
Title:	Mental handicap hospitals and units in England: Results from the Mental Health Enquiry 1984

Date published:	December 1985
Number of copies printed:	500
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	200 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	150 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	63

Statistical Bulletin No. 1/86	
Title:	Mental illness hospitals and units in England: Schizophrenia statistics 1981-84
Date published:	June 1986
Number of copies printed:	450
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	140 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	100 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	140

Statistical Bulletin No. 2/86	
Title:	NHS hospital activity statistics for England 1974-85
Date published:	July 1986
Number of copies printed:	500
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	300 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	50 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	131

Statistical Bulletin No. 3/86	(not issued)

Statistical Bulletin No. 4/86	
Title:	Mental illness hospitals and units in England: Results from the mental Health Enquiry 1985
Date published:	December 1986
Number of copies printed:	600
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	150 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	150 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	42

Statistical bulletin No. 5/86	
Title	Causes of blindness and partial sight among children aged under 16, newly registered as blind and partially sighted between 1976 and 1985.
Date published:	December 1986
Number of copies printed:	1,000
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	175 (includes some which were distributed to Local Authorities)
(b) The Press:	200 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	103

Statistical bulletin No. 6/86	
Title:	Mental handicap hospitals and units in England: Results from the Mental Health Enquiry 1985.
Date published:	December 1986
Number of copies printed:	600
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	150 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	150 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	50

Statistical bulletin No. 7/86	
Title:	Mental illness hospitals and units in England: Drug misuse statistics 1981-85.
Date published:	December 1986
Number of copies printed:	600
Number of distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	140 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	200 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	40

Statistical bulletin No. 1/87	
Tile:	NHS hospital acute in-patient statistics—England 1974-84.
Date published:	March 1987
Number of copies printed:	600
Number of distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	150 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	150 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	9

Statistical bulletin No. 2/87	
Title:	Mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England: Legal status statistics 1982-85.
Date published:	April 1987
Number of copies printed:	600
Number distributed free of charge to	
(a) Government and NHS users:	180 (approx.)
(b) The Press:	200 (approx.)
Numbers sold:	15

AIDS

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of households which have received the Government's AIDS leaflet to date.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Leaflets

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of his Department's new series of social security leaflets have been distributed *(a)* in total and *(b)* to members of the press.

Mr. Lyell: The number of copies of the new series of social security leaflets printed by the end of April were:

Leaflet		*Number printed (million)*
FB2	Which benefit?	2·00
FB6	Retiring?	3·00
FB8	Babies and benefits	3·50
FB23	Young people's guide to Social Security	3·00
FB27	Bringing up children?	3·00
FB28	Sick or disabled?	3·00
FB29	Help when someone dies	3·00
NI17A	Maternity benefits	1·14
NI196	Social Security benefit rates	5·35
NI246	How to appeal	0·70
NP38	Your future pension	0·50
NP39	Your Additional Pension statement	0·30

	Leaflet	Number printed (million)
MA1	Integrated leaflet/claim form for Maternity Allowance	0·86
SF100	Integrated leaflet/claim form for maternity payments from the Social Fund	0·90
SF200	Integrated leaflet/claim form for funeral payments from the Social Fund	1·50
TOTAL		31·75

An initial distribution has been made, but at any one time a proportion of these leaflets is held in store waiting to resupply local offices and other outlets. Further quantities will be printed throughout the year in response to demand.

Approximately 130 press packs containing a set of the new leaflets and explanatory material were distributed to members of the press.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the places in which the new social security leaflets are officially available.

Mr. Lyell: All social security leaflets and claim forms are available from local social security offices and supplies of leaflets can be obtained from the DHSS leaflets unit, PO Box 21, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AY.

Of the new leaflets FB6, FB8, FB23, FB27, FB28 and FB29 are also available at main post offices; MA1, SF100 and FB8 at ante-natal clinics; SF200 at registrars of births, deaths and marriages; and FB23 at careers offices.

Additionally, copies of social security leaflets are delivered direct to over 7,500 individuals and organisations including libraries, independent advice centres, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, and social services departments of local authorities.

General Medical Council (Registration)

Mr. Jim Lester asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of overseas applicants for registration with the General Medical Council between the years 1981 and 1987, and as to the ratio of passes to the total number who applied.

Mr. Newton: The numbers of overseas qualified doctors who were granted registration with the General Medical Council in the years 1981-86 were as follows:

	[1]1981	[1]1982	[1]1983	[1]1984	[1]1985	[2]1986
Full registration						
(i) to doctors holding overseas qualifications which the Council recognises	1,027	774	867	929	967	921
(ii) to doctors who had held limited registration without requalification in the United Kingdom	342	271	360	574	737	620
(iii) to doctors who had held limited registration and had requalified in the United Kingdom	93	78	101	154	139	123
(iv) to doctors who were in the United Kingdom temporarily to provide specialist services as Visiting Overseas Doctors	35	42	41	39	26	43
Total grants of full registration	1,497	1,165	1,369	1,696	1,869	1,707
Limited Registration						
Initial grants of limited registration to doctors with qualifications which the Council accepts	1,671	1,473	1,129	1,123	1,024	1,034

Source:
[1] General Medical Council's Annual Reports for the years 1981-85.
[2] General Medical Council.

We have no information about the numbers for 1987 nor about the number of overseas qualified doctors who applied unsuccessfully for registration in the years 1981 to 1986. My hon. Friend may care to approach the General Medical Council for these details.

Pregnant Women (AFP Test)

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and what proportion of pregnant women in England and Wales were given the AFP test for each year since 1978.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not available centrally.

Spina Bifida

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and what proportion of babies in England and Wales were born with spina bifida for each year since 1978, broken down in terms of live and still births.

Mrs. Currie: The information is given in the table.

Notifications of births with spina bifida, England and Wales 1978-86

Births

Year	Live			Still		
	Notifications	All live births	[1]Rate	Notifications	All still births	[2]Rate
1978	665	596,418	11·15	176	5,108	344·56
1979	677	638,028	10·61	166	5,125	323·90
1980	600	656,234	9·14	153	4,773	320·55
1981	530	634,492	8·35	124	4,207	294·75
1982	420	625,931	6·71	88	3,939	223·41
1983	369	629,134	5·87	49	3,631	134·95
1984	314	636,818	4·93	61	3,643	167·44
1985	325	656,417	4·95	35	3,645	96·02
1986[3]	236	662,200	3·56	19	3,555	53·45

[1] Rate per 10,000 live births.
[2] Rate per 10,000 still births.
[3] Provisional.

Note: Figues are derived from a voluntary system of notifying congenital malformations observed at birth or up to seven days after birth and are therefore an incomplete measure of the total number of affected infants.

Children in Care

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what number of children were in care in England and Wales for each year since 1978; and what proportion they were of the total number of children in England and Wales for each year since 1978.

Mrs. Currie: The numbers of children in care in England and Wales and the proportion of the population aged under 18 years for each year 1978-84 are given in "Children in Care in England and Wales", published annually, copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for 31 March 1985 show that the numbers and proportion aged under 18 years have continued to fall to 72,800 and 6·1 per 1,000 respectively. Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money has been spent on cervical cancer screening in England and Wales for every year since 1978; and what is the projected expenditure for each year until 1990.

Mrs. Currie: Total expenditure on cervical cancer screening is not separately identified in health authority accounts or forward plans. It has been estimated that the annual cost is between £20 million and £30 million.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list each social security benefit showing separately those which are paid in advance and those which are paid in arrears indicating the period in advance or arrears in each case and the day of the week which is the pay day on which each is paid.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested is as follows:

Benefit	*Frequency and period of payment*	*Pay day*
Retirement Pension	weekly in advance	Monday or Thursday
Widow's benefit	weekly in advance	Tuesday
Industrial Injury/Disablement Benefit	weekly in advance	Wednesday
Attendance Allowance	weekly in advance	Monday
Invalid Care Allowance	weekly in advance	Monday
Guardian's Allowance	weekly in advance	Monday or Tuesday
Family Income Supplement	weekly in advance	Tuesday
Supplementary Benefit	weekly in advance or fortnightly in advance to claimants who are available for employment	Monday or the appropriate day for payment of linked contributory social security benefit.
Mobility Allowance	four weekly; 3 weeks in arrear, 1 week in advance.	Wednesday
Child benefit	weekly or four-weekly in arrears	Monday or Tuesday
Maternity Allowance	weekly in arrears	Friday
Sickness benefit; Invalidity benefit; Severe Disablement allowance	weekly in arrears	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday depending on the claimant's NI number.
Unemployment benefit	fortnightly in arrears	Two days after the claimant's signing day.

Retirement pension, widow's benefit, mobility allowance, attendance allowance and child benefit may be paid direct to a beneficiary's bank account; payments under these arrangements are made four-weekly or quarterly in arrears.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each social security benefit the date or range of dates on which claimants will have received the new rate of benefit which came into force from Monday 6 April.

Mr. Lyell: The uprated benefits were paid as follows:

Benefit	*Date(s) Paid*
Retirement pension	6 April or 9 April
Widow's benefit	7 April
Il disablement benefit	8 April
Attendance allowance	6 April
Invalid care allowance	6 April
Guardian's allowance	6 April or 7 April
Family Income Supplement	7 April
Supplementary benefit	30 March—10 April
Mobility allowance	8 April
Child benefit	6 April or 7 April
Maternity allowance	10 April
Sickness benefit	9—15 April
Invalidity benefit	9—15 April
Severe disablement benefit	9—15 April
Unemployment benefit	8—24 April

Those benefits paid four-weekly or quarterly in arrears to a bank account will be paid later depending on the payment cycle.

There will have been delays in making payments on the above dates in a small number of the Department's local offices.

Adult Dental Health

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the research committee of his Department to finish its consideration of the proposed 1988 national survey of adult dental health.

Mrs. Currie: We have decided to go ahead with this survey. Preparatory work will begin shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

EC (Budgetary Controls)

Q154. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the operation of the agreement of 4 December 1984 on strict budgetary controls of EEC spending; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Council in June will be having extensive discussions on the future financing of the Community. I shall insist on the need to improve budget discipline and management, taking account of the Council conclusions of 4 December 1984.

Engagements

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

Mr. Amess asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

Mr. Canavan asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Broadcasting

4. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent progress has been made in the discussions within the European Economic Community on the broadcasting directive proposed by the Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The draft directive is still under discussion in the Council working group of officials. The Government continue to hold the view that a case has not been made out for Community legislation in this field, and that the proposed Council of Europe Convention provides a better way forward.

Crime (Clear-up Rate)

7. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the most recent clear-up rates for each police force area in England and Wales for all recorded crimes.

Mr. Mellor: As the answer is in the form of a table I will, with permission, circulate it in the *Official Report*. In 1986, the police cleared up 32 per cent. of all recorded notifiable offences in England and Wales.

Ratio of notifiable offences[1] recorded to notifiable offences cleared up by the police, 1986

England and Wales	*Percentages*
Avon and Somerset	29
Bedfordshire	29
Cambridgeshire	37
Cheshire	43
Cleveland	34
Cumbria	42
Derbyshire	48
Devon and Cornwall	40
Dorset	34
Durham	39
Essex	37
Gloucestershire	30
Greater Manchester	27
Hampshire	33
Hertfordshire	46
Humberside	30
Kent	34
Lancashire	45
Leicestershire	44
Lincolnshire	36
London, City of	13
Merseyside	37
Metropolitan Police	16
Norfolk	36
Northamptonshire	31
Northumbria	40
North Yorkshire	32
Nottinghamshire	33
South Yorkshire	43
Staffordshire	44
Suffolk	41
Surrey	34
Sussex	30
Thames Valley	35
Warwickshire	36
West Mercia	41

England and Wales	*Percentages*
West Midlands	29
West Yorkshire	38
Wiltshire	36
Dyfed-Powys	51
Gwent	50
North Wales	32
South Wales	39
England and Wales	32

[1] Excluding offences of "other criminal damage" value £20 or under.

27. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve the clear-up rate of crime in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have taken steps to increase the resources in money, equipment and manpower available to the police; but it is for chief officers to take operational decisions about what proportion of their available resources should be devoted to the investigation of crime in general or of particular crimes.

West Midlands Police

8. **Mr. George** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the annual report of the chief constable of the west midlands police for 1986.

Mr. Hurd: I was pleased to receive the chief constable's report, in which he records that 1986 was a year of considerable change, major problems, and some notable successes in many areas of the force's work. I am glad to see that the chief constable concludes that the west midlands police are in good heart with a high morale despite the daunting range of tasks that confronts them.

Criminal Injuries

10. **Mr. Bob Edwards** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases are currently awaiting decisions by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and how many of these have been waiting for more than 12 months.

Mr. Mellor: At the end of March 1987, the board had about 64,000 uncompleted cases. These included a number in which the board awaited the results of inquiries and about 8,000 cases in which it had made an initial decision. No record is kept of how many of the outstanding cases have been waiting for more than 12 months.

Crime (Epping Forest)

11. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what increases and decreases have occurred in the main categories of crime during the last year, or nearest convenient year, in those parts of the Metropolitan police district and of the Essex police area falling within the Epping Forest parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Mellor: The only information readily available to me is for the parts of Epping Forest district falling within the Metropolitan police district, where burglaries fell by 8 per cent. in 1986. The Metropolitan police recorded 1,848 offences of theft, about 150 more than in 1985; and 767 offences of criminal damage, about 100 more. The number of offences of violence, including robbery and sexual offences, remained low.

Burglars (Age Statistics)

14. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average age of offenders who commit burglary.

Mr. Mellor: The figures of those cautioned or convicted indicate that the peak age of offending for burglary is 15.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

15. **Sir John Osborn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of the effect of neighbourhood watch schemes on the level of crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Neighbourhood watch schemes vary considerably in size, scope and in the commitment of their members. Their effects will inevitably also vary considerably. A good deal of material is now to hand suggesting that some neighbourhood watch schemes are effective in reducing crime while others reduce the fear of crime and increase social cohesion. We shall continue to encourage the remarkable growth of these schemes.

23. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes now exist; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the preceding three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are now over 29,500 neighbourhood watch schemes in existence in England and Wales. This compares with some 14,500 schemes in June 1986, some 3,000 schemes in June 1985 and about 1,000 schemes in June 1984.

Prison Officers

19. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the prison officers.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend last met representatives of the Prison Officers Association on 2 March, when they talked about certain aspects of the fresh start proposals.

28. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers there are; and how this compares with the figure in 1979.

Mr. Mellor: On 1 April 1987 there were 19,176 staff employed in the prison officer class, compared with 15,708 on 1 April 1979.

Metropolitan Police (Crime Statistics)

20. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the most recent clear-up rates for crimes committed in the Metropolitan police area, categorised by the type of crime.

22. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the clear-up rate for crime in the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Hurd: Tables giving the numbers of offences recorded and cleared up in the Metropolitan police district, by main offence group, are regularly placed in the

Library. Decisions about what proportion of his available resources should be devoted to the investigation of crime in general or of particular crimes are for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, but I strongly support his decision, recorded in his strategy report for 1987, to identify as a priority, the enhanced detection of a number of offences of particular concern including burglary, robbery and racial and sexual attacks.

Crimes of Violence

21. **Mr. Lilley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have occurred in the level of sentences for crimes of violence over the past two years.

Mr. Mellor: The proportionate use of custody for offences of violence rose between 1983 and 1985, as did the average sentence length for males over 21 sentenced in the Crown court.

25. **Sir Peter Blaker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the most recent clear-up rate for crimes of violence; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1986 the clear-up rate for offences of violence against the person was 71 per cent. Although this rate represents a slight decrease on the previous year, the number of such offences cleared up was greater in 1986 than in 1985.

Offenders (Ages)

26. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average age of offenders in England and Wales committing each of *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* burglary, *(c)* theft and handling of stolen goods, *(d)* fraud and forgery, *(e)* criminal damage and *(f)* all crimes.

Mr. Mellor: The figures for those cautioned or convicted indicate the peak age of offending as 18 for violence against the person; 15 for burglary; 15 for theft and handling stolen goods; 18-21 for fraud and forgery and 15 for criminal damage. The peak age for known offending in general is 15 for boys and 14 for girls.

Tamil Refugees

29. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be in a position to make an announcement on the applications for asylum for the 64 Tamil refugees who arrived in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Waddington: The Sri Lankan Tamils who arrived here from Dhaka on 13 February are currently being re-interviewed. Fresh decisions on the individual applications will be reached as soon as possible.

Thames Valley Police

30. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet the chief constable of the Thames Valley police to consider the budget of the Thames Valley police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend does not expect to meet the chief constable for this purpose. It is the responsibility of the police authority to set the force's budget.

Animals (Cruelty)

31. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to enable courts to impose a ban on the keeping of animals by persons found guilty of offences involving abuse of or cruelty towards domestic animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are keen to ensure that effective penalties are available for all instances of cruelty to domestic animals. At present the court may disqualify a person from keeping a dog on first conviction for cruelty and other animals on a second or subsequent conviction. We are ready to consider support for proposals to make disqualification available in all instances on first conviction and the necessary consultations are now taking place.

Criminal Damage

32. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to deal with the rise in the number of acts of criminal damage over the past eight years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Criminal damage can often be prevented by good design. The Government's crime prevention strategy includes work to support local action against vandalism and other forms of criminal damage; for example, we have issued good practice guidelines to local authority chief executives and to chief officers of police on the handling of local anti-vandalism campaigns.

Crime (Use of firearms)

33. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase since 1978 in the total number of crimes in England and Wales in which a firearm was used.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms of all types, including air weapons, were reported to have been used are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the latest edition, for 1985 Cm. 10). In 1985, 9,742 such offences were recorded, compared to 5,672 in 1978.

Prison Officers (Protective Clothing)

34. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has decided to issue protective clothing to all prison establishments for the use of prison officers when dealing with patients suffering from AIDS.

Mr. Mellor: The decision to issue protective clothing to all prison establishments was taken as part of a package of preventive measures designed to protect prison officers against possible infection from hepatitis B or by the AIDS virus. While protective clothing will rarely be medically indicated, it has been made available in establishments for use when judged necessary.

Policemen (Dorset)

35. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the future provision of policemen in Dorset.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is the responsibility of the Dorset police authority to determine the authorised establishment of the force, subject to my right hon. Friend's approval. Seventy-one additional police posts have been approved for the force since May 1979, bringing the authorised establishment up to 1,235. The last increase was nine police posts approved with effect from 1 April 1987, which met in full the police authority's application for this financial year (1987-88).

Metropolitan Police (Stop and Search Operations)

36. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many stop and search operations took place in 1986 in the Metropolitan police area; how many of these resulted in *(a)* arrests and *(b)* successful prosecutions; and what were the equivalent figures for 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the number of stops and searches in 1986 in each police force area, recorded in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, will be published shortly in a Home Office statistical bulletin. I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the available information for stops and searches in 1985 relates to the last three quarters of 1985 only, during which a total of 24,600 searches of persons and vehicles were made, resulting in 4,000 arrests. Prior to 1 April 1985, the information collected related to all stops and was collected on an annual basis only; figures for the first quarter of 1985 could only be provided at disproportionate cost. From 1 April 1985 a force order was introduced and information was collected in line with the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 in anticipation of its implementation on 1 January 1986. The figures collected in 1985 will not be comparable with those for 1986 because the 1984 Act extended the powers of search available.

Buildings (Hostile Attacks)

37. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the final report of the working party on the rescue of persons from the buildings damaged by hostile attack will be published; and if he will make it his policy to place a copy of the report in the Library as soon as it is available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg The report of the working group on rescue is expected by the summer. Decisions on the publication of its recommendations will be taken when the report has been received.

"Civil Protection"

38. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange for a copy of each subsequent issue of the quarterly bulletin, "Civil Protection", to be sent out to all hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A number of copies of each issue are placed in the Library. If any hon. Members wish to receive copies on an individual basis we should be happy to include them on the mailing list.

Civil Protection Planning

39. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to issue a statement on the current state of civil protection planning following the conclusion of the initial phase of the planned programme for implementation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall prepare a further report on the implementation of the 1983 regulations in the light of the information which we have asked local authorities to supply by 1 October.

40. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied, on the basis of the plans so far submitted under the planned programme for implementation, with the performance of local authorities in recruiting and training civil defence volunteers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Much more undoubtedly needs to be done by most local authorities in accepting and training civil defence volunteers. The planned programme for implementation suggests that initial priority should be given to the completion of detailed operational plans. But as the programme develops we shall be giving increasing attention to the role of volunteers.

41. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if all the local authorities required to do so under the planned programme for implementation have submitted their plans compiled under the Civil Defence Regulations 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The PPI is a rolling three-year programme setting a series of monitoring targets for all the requirements of the 1983 regulations. The first target date in respect of plans is 1 October this year. All the initial PPI meetings with individual county authorities have been completed satisfactorily.

Prison Building Programme

42. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the most recent progress in the prison building programme.

Mr. Mellor: The prison building programme includes 20 new establishments. Three have been completed and occupied; six are being built; two of which will be ready for occupation this year and three by spring 1988; the remainder are at various stages of design or planning. Together these new establishments will provide some 10,600 new places by the mid 1990s. In addition, we are modernising and redeveloping the existing prison estate, with major capital works in progress or planned at about 100 establishments. This part of the building programme will provide a further 6,600 new places by about the same date making a total of 17,200 in all.

Church Buildings

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek to amend the terms of charity law to enable owners of church buildings to allow them to be sold to other religious denominations even if they do not offer the highest purchase price; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

This is not principally a matter concerning charity law. If a building is held subject to a trust, the trustees wishing to sell it have a general duty, regardless of the nature of the building, to obtain the best price that they reasonably can. I see no reason for disapplying this duty in the case of church buildings.

British Summer Time

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received in support of the extension of British summer time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the past 12 months we have received 33 representations favouring the extension of summer time by the introduction of British standard time or central European time and 13 proposals for other changes.

British Broadcasting Corporation

Mr. Roy Jenkins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in considering the four appointments or reappointments to be made to the board of governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation pending, he will make it his policy to seek a broad political spread amongst those appointed.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to a question by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 28 April at column 65-66.

Settlement Applications

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long it currently takes to consider the application for settlement of a spouse of a British citizen who has been allowed to remain in Britain following marriage and whose entry was on a valid visa.

Mr. Waddington: For such cases decided in 1986, the average time between application and the grant of settlement was about 4½ months.

Elections (Unopposed Candidates)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many seats in today's elections resulted in the return of unopposed candidates.

Mr. Hurd: This information is not yet available.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of the police attendance at the four sites chosen for exploration of low-level nuclear waste dumping from July 1986.

Mr. Hurd: I am asking the relevant chief constables to let me have such information as is available and will write to the hon. Member.

Prisons (Costs)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of maintaining a prisoner in *(a)* local prisons, *(b)* other prisons and *(c)* penal establishments for those below prison age, in the latest year for which statistics are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information was published in the report on the work of the prison department 1985-86 (Cm. 11—appendix 3, table E) a copy of which is in the Library. As noted in paragraph 70 of the report, the figures reflected a 1 per cent. reduction in real operating costs, in a year in which the prison population grew by 7 per cent.

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, pursuant to his reply of 1 April, *Official Report*, columns *515-16*, he has made any further appointment to the Animal Procedures Committee under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Hurd: Further to my reply of 1 April 1987, I am pleased to announce that, acting jointly with the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland I have appointed Professor T. R. E. Pilkington to the animal procedures committee established under section 19 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Professor Pilkington is professor of medicine at St. George's hospital medical school, London. I am very grateful to Professor Pilkington for letting us have the benefit of his considerable expertise in the new committee.

Prison System (Research and Advisory Group)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of the research and advisory group on the long-term prison system.

Mr. Hurd: A report setting out the research and advisory group's advice on the special units for long-term prisoners recommended by the control review committee has been published today under the title "Special Units for Long-Term Prisoners: Regimes, Management and Research". Copies have been placed in the Library.

Metropolitan Police (Reorganisation)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the progress of the force reorganisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the reorganisation of the force is now nearly complete.

The territorial structure of the force has been simplified by the abolition of the district level of command. Largely as a result of this, the number of commander and chief superintendent posts has been reduced by more than 50. The new two-tier structure consists of eight Areas and 75 territorial divisions. Chains of command have been shortened, and divisional chief superintendents have been given greater responsibilities.

The growth of the force headquarters has been reversed and its size reduced by devolving many many of its functions to areas and divisions. As a result, some 1,200 posts will be passed to areas and 218 posts will be abolished, resulting in the release of that number of officers for operational posts at areas and on divisions. Most of these changes have taken place already, and the

remainder will follow by April 1988. In addition, 150 civil staff will have been released from headquarters by this date.

As a further consequence of the reorganisation, another 200 officers have been released for deployment to other operational duties on divisions by the setting up of territorial support groups to replace the special patrol group and district support units.

I greatly welcome these changes and the benefits which the force reorganisation promises for the future.

Guildford Pub Bombings

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why no mention was made in his Department's memorandum on the Guildford bombing case of the medical inquiry into the condition of Carole Richardson conducted at the request of the senior medical officer at HM remand centre, Risley, in April 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April, c. *364*]: We took account of the report in the consideration of the case which preceded my right hon. Friend's statement on 20 January this year at columns 735-38. But we did not think it right for the memorandum supplementing that statement to make any reference to a medical report which, so far as we were aware, had not been made public by Miss Richardson's solicitors.

We are giving further consideration to the report in the context of the representations about the case which have been made since 20 January.

Coroners (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many of Her Majesty's coroners currently holding office in Wales are Welsh-speaking; and how many are not Welsh-speaking.

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April, c. *424*]: Of the 50 coroners, deputy coroners and assistant deputy coroners holding office in Wales, 15 are sufficiently fluent in Welsh to be able to conduct an inquest without an interpreter.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Voluntary Aided Schools

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to fund capital projects in voluntary aided schools to enable them to meet minimum statutory requirements for premises.

Mr. Dunn: When making allocations in respect of capital expenditure by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools, my right hon. Friend takes account of certain statutory requirements. In 1987-88 the allocations allowed for all the projects falling into the following categories: committed expenditure on projects already under way to which governors are legally and contractually committed; "basic need", that is new or expanded schools in areas of population growth; work related to statutory proposals approved by my right hon. Friend which the proposers are legally obliged to implement.

It was also possible to support 13 major projects which, while not statutorily necessary, were required to remedy severe dilapidation or to improve extremely inadequate accommodation. Further sums for minor works were made available to local authorities for them to apply in consultation with the governors of aided schools in their areas.

My right hon. Friend will continue to take account of statutory requirements, as well as the desirability of upgrading inadequate premises when making allocations in future years.

"Providing for Quality"

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the circular "Providing for Quality: the Pattern of Organisation to Age 19", issued in draft form in August 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish the final copy of the draft circular, "Providing for Quality"; and why it was not published by Easter as originally proposed.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The circular is being published today. It aims to give comprehensive advice on school provision and organisation to all school promoters. It explains and develops the guidance in the 1985 White Paper "Better Schools", and offers advice on the curricular and other considerations which promoters should bear in mind in formulating proposals for future rationalisation. The text incorporates a number of revisions which have been made in the light of responses to the draft.

Meningitis

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will ensure that a decision whether or not to fund the Edinburgh meningitis project will be taken in such time as to enable the department of bacteriology at the university of Edinburgh to appoint appropriate staff for the project to start at the beginning of the forthcoming academic year.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand that the application from the department of bacteriology at the university of Edinburgh will be considered by the Medical Research Council's physiological systems and disorders board at its next meeting in June. It is for the MRC to determine its scientific priorities from within the annual grant in aid which it receives from the Department's science budget.

Academic Institutions (MRC Funding)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the minimum period for an academic institution to be informed, in advance of the beginning of any academic year, of what Medical Research Council funding will be available for that year.

Mrs. Rumbold: Academic institutions receive Medical Research Council funding through grants to individual applicants. Each grant covers a specific project or programme of research, has a fixed tenure and provides an agreed level of support. MRC funding for each institution is the sum of all the individual grants made to researchers in that institution. Thus funding for an academic year is

determined by the grants in existence at the beginning of each year but may increase during the year as new grants are awarded.

Welsh Language

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the present allowance for Welsh medium teaching at the University College of Wales referred to by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 30 April, *Official Report*, column *469*.

Mrs. Rumbold: As I said, the separate constituents of the block grant made to each university are not identified by the University Grants Committee, in accordance with established convention.

Comprehensive Schools and Examinations

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will state the main points which were agreed at a meeting between his Department's director of statistics and the authors of the Centre for Policy Studies' report, "Comprehensives: Counting the Cost", to consider his Department's statistical bulletin 13/84 and its relevance to proposals for the reorganisation of secondary schools;

(2) if he will state the findings of his Department's statistical analyses of examination attainments at 16-plus; and what differential performance they show as between local education authorities with 15 per cent. of pupils in grammar schools and fully comprehensive local education authorities assuming that social class factors are held constant.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Expenditure

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent on primary and secondary schools *(a)* in England as a whole and *(b)* in Staffordshire each year since 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is given in the following table:

Net institutional recurrent expenditure

£ million—1985-86 real terms

	On Primary Schools		*On Secondary Schools*	
	England	*Staffordshire*	*England*	*Staffordshire*
1978-79	3,087	73·4	3,871	86·6
1979-80	2,990	70·6	3,796	85·2
1980-81	3,081	72·4	4,012	91·3
1981-82	3,050	71·9	4,091	94·2
1982-83	2,993	69·2	4,098	93·0
1983-84	2,979	67·8	4,130	97·8
1984-85	2,958	64·3	4,112	97·4
1985-86	[1]2,939	64·1	[1]4,035	96·1

[1] Provisonal.

Note:

The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1985-86 prices using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.

Schools (Reorganisation)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the report by Mr. Angus Mitchell of the efficiency scrutiny of procedures for the reorganisation of schools in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The report is being published today, together with a summary of the conclusions I have reached on its recommendations.

I am grateful to Mr. Mitchell for his report, a copy of which I have placed in the Library. I have accepted a number of his recommendations, including his proposals that the Department should update the published guidance on its criteria for the consideration of proposals to reorganise schools, and that the Department should take steps to accelerate its own procedures. My aim will be to decide all proposals, wherever practicable, within six months of their publication.

I am also proposing to consult the local authority associations and other interested parties about his recommendation for a code of practice on the ocnsultation procedures to be followed before proposals for school reorganisations are made. I could not, however, accept other recommendations, particularly those which would have changed the framework within which the character of schools is determined and thus run counter to the steps the Government are taking to secure their greater autonomy.

PBI-NSDO (Sale)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will report progress on the sale of part of the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Seed Development Organisation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: An information memorandum offering for sale certain Plant Breeding Institute plant breeding assets and all the shares of the National Seed Development Organisation is being made available today.

The memorandum, which is being issued by Lazard Brothers on the Government's behalf and which contains commercially confidential material, will be issued to serious prospective purchasers on completion of an undertaking to keep its contents confidential. Interested purchasers should contact Lazard Brothers.

The principal PBI plant breeding assets to be sold are the breeding programmes for wheat, barley, potatoes and field beans, certain chemistry, pathology, physiology, statistics and computing activities and the site and buildings at Trumpington.

The PBI's plant science programmes, including molecular genetics and cytogenetics, and the oilseed rape breeding programme are not included in the sale. The plant science programmes will become part of the Agricultural and Food Research Council's new Institute of Plant Science Research, to be based at Norwich. Relevant programmes will continue on the Trumpington site until the end of March 1990. Following the sale of PBI plant breeding and NSDO, the Agricultural Genetics Company will take over the oilseed rape breeding programme on a basis agreed with the Agricultural and Food Research Council. The council will receive a financial return as new oilseed rape varieties are produced.

Prospective purchasers will have until 12 June to submit offers and are also being asked to supply relevant details about their present activities and future strategy. A short list of possible purchasers will thereafter be drawn up.

In finalising the sale, the Government will wish to be satisfied that the successful purchaser is committed to the continuation of plant breeding relevant to United Kingdom agriculture and horticulture as well as to research, investment and employment in the United Kingdom.

Education Support Grants

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish his proposals for the programme of education support grants in 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have written today to the local authority associations proposing expenditure of £115·5 million on this programme next year — that is £75·5 million for the continuing support of projects begun in earlier years and £40 million for new projects. The purposes for which I propose to pay grant are listed in the table. The new starts fall into five broad terms.

To improve the school curriculum I propose to extend support for the employment of advisory teachers in science and technology for the primary schools, and to pursue the recommendations of the Cockroft report on mathematics teaching. I also propose pilot projects to develop records of achievement for school leavers, to encourage schools to try alternatives to French as the first foreign language offered to pupils, and to prepare all pupils for life in a mult-ethnic society.

In the field of special needs I propose to offer more LEAs support for the establishment of teams to help parents with the education of handicapped pupils under five, and to continue the work of preventing drug misuse among young people.

In further education I propose new starts in four activities. These are designed to open educational opportunities to adults, to stimulate new forms of provision for young people in the cities, and to equip technical colleges to teach computer-aided engineering.

I propose to devote almost half of the expenditure on new starts, £19 million, to the expansion of information technology in the schools. Information technology has already shown its potential to improve the education of school pupils of all ages and in most subjects. I seek now to spread its benefits more widely through the provision to schools of more microcomputers, and more advisory teachers.

Finally, I propose support for the instalment of management information systems in further education establishments.

Grant would be paid at the rate of 70 per cent. on expenditure approved for 1989 in all these activities except the third (records of achievement), where I propose a rate of 50 per cent. I have invited views from the local authority associations on the question of the wider use of the 50 per cent. rate in future years; and on my proposals to encourage authorities to supplement the public expenditure on information technology in schools and computer-aided engineering with private contributions.

When I have completed consultations with the local authority associations, I shall lay before the House the necessary amendments to the education support grant regulations, and issue a circular inviting local education authorities to bid for the programme.

Expenditure (£ million at assumed 1988-89 prices)

Activity	*1988-89*		*1989-90*	
	new	*continuing*	*arising from 1988-89 starts*	*arising from earlier starts*
New Starts				
School curriculum				
(1) Primary science	2·9	6·2	5·1	1·6
(2) Maths in schools	4·6	2·8	8·6	—
(3) Records of achievement	1·2	—	1·2	—
(4) Alternative first foreign language	0·3	—	0·5	—
(5) Education for multi-ethnic society	1·4	1·4	2·0	0·5
Health and special needs				
(6) Portage schemes	1·1	2·0	1·1	0·6
(7) Drugs misuse	2·3	0·2	—	—
Further education: curriculum and support				
(8) Educational needs of the unemployed	0·9	0·9	0·2	0·1
(9) Learning by achievement	1·0	—	2·6	—
(10) Open learning	1·0	—	1·2	—
(11) Computer-aided engineering	2·1	—	—	—
Information technology				
(12) IT in NAFE	0·2	4·6	0·2	4·3
(13) IT in schools	19·0	—	10·0	—

Activity	1988-89 new	1988-89 continuing	1989-90 arising from 1988-89 starts	1989-90 arising from earlier starts
Management in education				
(14) Management information in FE colleges	2·0	—	3·2	—
Total New Starts	40·0	18·1	35·9	7·1
Activities Continuing Without New Starts				
(15) Supervision of pupils at midday	—	40·5	—	40·5
(16) Urban primary schools	—	0·6	—	0·4
(17) Rural primary schools	—	1·6	—	1·6
(18) Appraisal of school teachers	—	2·2	—	—
(19) Books and equipment for GCSE	—	10·0	—	—
(20) Spoken word	—	0·4	—	0·4
(21) Social responsibility	—	1·4	—	1·4
(22) PICKUP	—	0·7	—	0·2
Total Continuing Activities	—	57·4	—	44·5
Totals	40·0	75·5	35·9	51·6
Total Yearly Expenditure	£115·5 million		£87·5 million	

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his statement in the debate on the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order 1987 on 5 May, *Official Report*, column *677*, if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter to head teachers about future pay determination arrangements for teachers.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Yes; I have written today to head teachers of maintained schools in England. Copies of my letter have been placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue yield from value added tax at 17 per cent. on the sale of new houses in the current financial year on the basis of estimated sales in 1986 and 1987; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing which European Economic Community countries propose value added tax on *(a)* new housing and *(b)* other housing.

Mr. Brooke: It is estimated that the net additional full-year revenue of imposing value added tax at 17 per cent. on private new housing would be about £775 million (at 1987-88 prices), based on estimated sales in 1986.

In Portugal and the Federal Republic of Germany, sales of new houses are understood to be exempt from value added tax, but subject to specific property taxes. The other European Economic Community countries appear to tax private new housing at either the standard or reduced rates of value added tax.

Other housing transactions are generally exempt from value added tax in all the Community countries, although Italy is believed to tax sales made by registered traders. I regret that information about the tax treatment of housing in Greece is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue yield from value added tax at 15 per cent. on the estimated sales of new houses in 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke: It is estimated that the net additional full-year revenue of imposing value added tax at 15 per cent. on private new housing would be about £675 million (at 1986-87 prices), based on estimated sales in 1986.

Textiles (Customs Seizures)

Mr. Waller asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the number of cases where textile goods imported into the United Kingdom have been seized under the provisions of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 on the grounds that they contravened section 16 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, for each of the past five years.

Mr. Brooke: In each of the last five years the number of cases where textile goods have been seized under the provisions of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 on the grounds that they contravened section 16 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, were as follows:

	Number
1982	nil
1983	nil
1984	82
1985	97
1986	149

Prior to 1984, Customs practice was not to seize goods imported contrary to the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, but to detain them and then release them when the offending marks had been removed or altered.

Civil Servants (Pay)

Mr. Onslow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what grades in the Civil Service are currently entitled to automatic annual pay increments; and how many staff this involves.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Strip Searches

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Mrs.

Jean Warrington was strip-searched by customs officers at Gatwick airport during the first week of April; what is the policy of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise towards the use of strip searches; what guidelines are given to customs officers on the procedures for strip searches; with particular reference to the treatment of pregnant women; and as to the sex of the officers who carried out the search; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987]: No. Individual clearances of passengers and their baggage are dealt with on a confidential basis. Passengers may be searched by customs officers under the provisions of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that dutiable, prohibited or restricted goods are being carried, or by virtue of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Application to Customs and Excise) Order 1985 under which the relevant provisions of the latter Act are applied directly to the activities of customs officers. With certain specific exceptions (eg Heads of State and accredited diplomats) any passenger is liable to be searched provided there are reasonable grounds.

Customs officers are required, and trained, to carry out all such searches professionally and with tact and courtesy. Female passengers may not be searched by or in the presence of male officers and internal examinations can only be undertaken by a qualified medical practitioner.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Michael Delaney

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General if, in the light of the verdict of the coroner's court of unlawful killing in respect of the death on 10 January of Michael Delaney, he will take steps to prosecute those responsible for Mr. Delaney's death; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No.

Lord Rothschild

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General if, pursuant to his answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column 7, the Director of Public Prosecutions has yet received an interim report from the Metropolitan police in relation to the possible prosecution of Lord Rothschild under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions received an interim report from the Metropolitan Police on 24 April and is considering it. It may be necessary to ask the police to make further inquiries before a decision can be taken.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of typical waiting times for the various categories of application for entry clearance at each port in the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Renton: As at 31 March 1987, waiting times for interview in respect of applications for entry clearance for settlement are as set out in the table (in months):

	Priority Queue	*Spouses and children under 18*	*Fiancé(e)s and others*	*re-applicants*
Islamabad	3	8	14	15
Karachi	3	6	11	(no cases)
New Delhi	3	4	8	12
Bombay	3	6	10	12
Calcutta		No queues in operation		
Madras		No queues in operation		
Dhaka	3	7	7	21

The great majority of applications for visit visas is currently dealt with within 24 hours. In the few cases where a more detailed interview is required the waiting times are 12 working days in New Delhi, five working days in Bombay and one to three days in Madras. There are no queues for visit visas at the other posts listed above.

Hong Kong

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *16*, the changes in the conditions of employment for foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong will apply to those helpers already working in the colony.

Mr. Renton: The revised conditions of employment for foreign domestic helpers will apply to those helpers already working in Hong Kong with the exception of the provision governing wage levels. This will apply only to those renewing existing contracts or entering new ones.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will enable oral representations to be made by the people of Hong Kong in response to the forthcoming Green Paper on the development of representative government in the territory.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government announced on 25 March that an independent survey office will be established to collect, collate and report on the public response to the Green Paper which is soon to be published in Hong Kong. In accordance with its terms of reference, the office will take positive steps to invite and encourage as wide a public response as possible. The people of Hong Kong will be able to express their views to the office through a wide variety of channels.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the minimum level of remuneration for foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Following an announcement by the Hong Kong Government on 16 April, the lowest possible wage for foreign domestic helpers entering or renewing contracts will be 2,300 Hong Kong dollars per month. The aim of the Hong Kong Government in announcing these changes is to protect the interests of foreign domestic helpers and their employers, as well as those of local domestic helpers.

Ascension Island (Cats)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the control of feral cats in Ascension Island.

Mr. Renton: Ascension Island services and the Royal Air Force periodically undertake cat culls to ensure that

the feral cat population does not increase to a level at which it becomes a serious threat to public health or the bird life of the Island. The most recent was last month, when 35 cats were destroyed. The next is scheduled for June. In 1986, 273 feral cats were destroyed.

DEFENCE

United States Forces

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has as to why Dodge Ram, Chevrolet Blazer, Chevrolet Suburban cruise support vehicles and other commercial utility cargo vehicles were transferred from United States air force Greenham Common to *(a)* United States air force Molesworth and *(b)* United States air force Alconbury between 20 March and 10 April;

(2) what information he has as to how many packets of commercial utility cargo vehicles were moved to United States air force Molesworth and United States air force Alconbury between 20 March and 10 April;

(3) what information he has as to what cargo was carried in each packet of commercial utility cargo vehicles that were transferred to United States air force Molesworth and United States air force Alconbury between 20 March and 10 April;

(4) what information he has as to whether any United States air force Chevrolet security police vehicles have been moved from United States air force Greenham Common to United States air force Molesworth and United States air force Alconbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Numerous movements of commercial vehicles in and out of RAF Molesworth and RAF Alconbury took place on a routine basis during the period in question. It is not our practice to detail the goods being moved to and from service establishments, or generally to comment on military vehicle movements.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any personnel from the 501st tactical missile wing have been assigned to temporary support duty with the 303rd tactical missile wing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The assignment of United States service personnel to United States units is a matter for the United States authorities.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force or other British forces personnel are currently attached to the 303 tactical missile wing.

Mr. Stanley: For security reasons I cannot disclose the number of British service men at a given location.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what records are kept of damage caused to cruise missile convoys and support vehicles;

(2) whether specific forms are in use to record the damage caused to cruise missile convoys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Incidents causing damage to vehicles associated with cruise missile training are recorded on information sheets.

Explosives (Eastern Bloc Countries)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence from which Eastern bloc countries explosives for use in British armaments are obtained stating, in respect of each, the percentage of total explosives used in British armaments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only known recent instance of the use of Eastern bloc explosives in ammunition for the British services was the 1985 use, by the Belgian company PRB, of a quantity of Polish TNT in fulfilling an order for 25-pounder shells for use in low-level training. The TNT in the order concerned constituted very much less than one per cent. of that used by or in use with the British services.

Royal Navy (Ship Orders)

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many major ships and submarines have been ordered for the Royal Navy since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Sixty-three major ships and submarines have been ordered for the Royal Navy since 1 January 1979.

Morthoe II

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the arrangements for the ordering, tendering, and production of the Morthoe II defence system; and to what extent the equipment being supplied *(a)* meets the original specifications, *(b)* will be delivered on the originally agreed date, and *(c)* will be supplied at the price agreed when the order was originally given.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the evidence given to the Comptroller and Auditor General and to the Public Accounts Committee, as reflected in their reports; respectively, Ministry of Defence: Control and Management of the Development of Major Equipment (dated 22 July 1986) and sixth report (dated 18 February 1987).

Aero Engines (Sale)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will hold an inquiry into the source of the letter dated 19 March to companies in the United Kingdom purporting to announce the suspension of tenders in relation to the sale of surplus aero engines by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The source of the letter is being investigated by the MOD Police.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place a copy of all correspondence sent by his Department to companies intending to tender for the surplus Palouste mark 102 aero engines relating to tender applications in the Library; and will he make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 9 March 1987, MOD issued a tender inviting bids for a number of Palouste mark 102 and other aero engines which were surplus to requirements. Tenders were due for return by 23 April 1987.

Early in April, my officials learned that two potential tenderers had received a letter dated 19 March, purportedly from MOD, advising that the tender had been suspended. Those letters were passed to the MOD and handed over to the MOD police for investigation.

Officials then wrote to all those originally invited to tender to inform them that the sale would proceed as originally indicated except that to allow for any inconvenience suffered by those who had received the spurious letter dated 19 April, the date for return of tenders would be extended until 14 May 1987.

I have placed copies of the correspondence sent by MOD in the Library.

Tender

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement as to the status of tender numbered 6P(Air)/187/88/294.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The status of tender numbered F 6t(Air)/1/87-88/294 is that it remains valid and the date for return has been extended until 14 May 1987.

Air Defence

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes are contemplated in the short-range air defence of Royal Air Force airfields in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: We are intending to make a significant increase in the number of Rapier fire units deployed at RAF stations in the United Kingdom. By deploying existing RAF manpower and using Rapier fire units from the RAF repair pool, we plan by the early 1990s to achieve a 50 per cent. increase in the number of Rapier fire units being used to protect United Kingdom RAF stations. This will be a further useful improvement in the United Kingdom's air defences.

Salamanca Barracks (Search)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature of the witness evidence received which led to the commanding officer of 3 Regiment, Army Air Corps to authorise the search of the Navy, Army, Air Force Institutes hostel at Salamanca barracks, Soest; what were the alleged stolen goods; how many residents are at the hostel; how many military personnel were involved; and why a sniffer dog was used.

Mr. Freeman: Witness evidence was received to the effect that certain residents of the NAAFI had been carrying numerous items of electrical equipment to and from their rooms. Witness evidence was also received which indicated that one of the residents had been regularly seen fitting radios to privately owned vehicles in the barracks. There were six residents at the hostel at the time of the search and six royal military police were involved, one for each resident. A sniffer dog was used because information received from an additional source gave reasonable grounds to suspect that proscribed drugs were being used on the premises.

Nuclear Weapons (Deployment)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the approximate number of nuclear *(a)* intermediate range, *(b)* short range and *(c)* battlefield weapons deployed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact, respectively.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: I refer my hon. Friend to figures 15 and 16 of annex A to volume 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987" (Cmnd. 101) published today.

United Kingdom-United States of America (Treaties)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list all treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the support provided by the United Kingdom Government either directly or indirectly for United States' military bases and installations and facilities in the United Kingdom and its territorial waters and for their expansion in a time of tension or war;

(2) if he will list all treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the use by the United States of military bases, both operational and support, and facilities within the territorial waters of the United Kingdom, the arrangements for the operational control of such bases and facilities, and their expansion in a time of tension and war.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to the answer*, 1 May 1987, c. *300*]: From the information that is readily available, is unclassified and can be released without incurring disproportionate costs I can list the following agreements.

a. The Churchill/Truman understanding 1952;
b. Exchange of notes relating to the sale of tobacco by the United States Government and the construction of housing and community facilities by HM Government 1956;
c. Memorandum of agreement on Fylingdales BMEWS 1960;
d. Agreement on the use of Holy Loch 1960;
e. Lines of communication arrangement 1973;
f. Memorandum of understanding on the use of Royal Air Force bases by United States Air Forces operational units 1974;
g. USAF Rapier MOU 1981;
h. Memorandum of understanding concerning ground-launched cruise missiles 1985;
i. Memorandum of understanding on the modernisation of the BMEWS, RAF Fylingdales 1986;

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all treaties, agreements, memoranda of understanding and other formal arrangements currently in force between the United States of America and the United Kingdom covering the use by the United States of America of bases and facilities in British territory outside the United Kingdom and support provided by the United Kingdom Government either directly or indirectly.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to the answer*, 1 May 1987, c. *300*]: US military facilities exist at Ascension Island, Bermuda and Diego Garcia under the following instruments respectively:

Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning the extension of the Bahamas Long Range Proving Ground by the Establishment of Additional Sites in Ascension Island.
Dated 25 June 1956.

Treaty Series No. 25 (1956).
Command 9810.

Agreement between the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States of America relating to the Bases Leased to the United States of America and Exchanges of Notes.
Dated 27 March 1941.
Treaty Series No. 2 (1941).
Command 6259.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning a United States Navy Support Facility on Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territory (The Diego Garcia Agreement 1976).
Dated 25 February 1976.
Treaty Series No. 19 (1976).
Command 6413.

Subsequent exchanges for Ascension Island and Bermuda respectively are:

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning the Practical Application of the Agreement of June 25, 1956 for the Addition to the Bahamas Long Range Proving Ground of Sites in Ascension Island.
Dated 24-25 August 1959.
Treaty Series No. 77 (1959).
Command 867.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Government of the United States of America concerning the use of the Airfield at Wideawake in Ascension Island by aircraft of the Royal Air Force.
Dated 29 August 1962.
Treaty Series No. 71 (1962).
Command 1869.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning the Establishment on Ascension Island of an Additional Facility to be operated for the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
Dated 7 July 1965.
Treaty Series No. 74 (1965).
Command 2761.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning Facilities for United States Forces on Ascension Island.
Dated 30 March 1973.
Treaty Series No. 55 (1973).
Command 5311.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America regarding arrangements for the use by United Kingdom Forces of Military Facilities on Ascension Island.
Dated 25 March 1985.
Treaty Series No. 39 (1985).
Command 9590.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America modifying the Leased Bases Agreement of 27th March 1941.
Dated 19 July-1 August 1950.
Treaty Series No. 65 (1950).
Command 8076.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America regarding additional Civil Airport facilities at the United States Kindley Air Force Base, Bermuda.
Dated 4 June 1968.
Treaty Series No. 80 (1968).
Command 3753.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America amending and supplementing the Agreement of 27 March 1941, as amended, regarding Leased Naval and Air Bases on Bermuda.
Dated 5-6 December 1978.
Treaty Series No. 46 (1979).
Command 7561.

Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America further amending and supplementing the Agreement of 27 March 1941, as amended, regarding Leased Naval and Air Bases on Bermuda.
Dated 7 March 1985.
Treaty Series No. 46 (1985).
Command 9607.

Her Majesty's Government provide certain administrative and logistic support within the terms of these agreements.

SCOTLAND

Lung Cancer

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will be taking to seek to bring down the high incidence of lung cancer in Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Tobacco smoking is a prime cause of lung cancer. The Government's strategy is to inform people about the health risks associated with smoking by the promotion of health education. At national level, the Scottish Health Education Group spent £267,000 (provisional) in 1986-87 on its anti-smoking programmes. In addition, by its sponsorship of the Scottish Football Association cup, positive health messages about non-smoking have been included in trackside and other advertising at football grounds. Information about health education programmes undertaken by Greater Glasgow health board can be obtained from the health board.

Tobacco smoking is the greatest single cause of avoidable ill health and premature death in Scotland and any reduction in smoking would consequently reduce the incidence of lung cancer.

Monofilament Nets

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for bringing the treatment of English and Danish fishing vessels into line respecting the carriage of monofilament nets in Scottish waters and at Scottish ports.

Mr. John MacKay: None. The order relates to United Kingdom vessels in inshore waters around Scotland and was made to improve enforcement in salmon protection.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Grimsby fishing vessels have been

searched for monofilament nets in Scottish ports in the last year; how many such nets have been found; and what action has been taken at local level.

Mr. John MacKay: We do not keep our records in such detailed forms and it would not be cost-effective to do so. We have in the course of routine inspections found one such net on a Grimsby vessel and my officials have duly cautioned the skipper with a view to referring the case for prosecution.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to his fishery officers in respect of treatment of English fishing vessels putting into Scottish ports and carrying monofilament nets for *(a)* safety reasons, *(b)* to seek emergency medical treatment, *(c)* for repairs and *(d)* to unload and sell fish.

Mr. John MacKay: As I indicated when we debated the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Carriage of Monofilament Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986, my officials are under instruction to enforce it in a sensible way and not to refer for possible prosecution vessels carrying monofilament nets in cases of emergency, such as engine malfunction or medical problems or, subject to permission, where adverse weather conditions justify coming into the specified sea area or into port. In the absence of such emergencies, referal for prosecution would result from failure to respect the ban.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many English fishing vessels have been prosecuted for carriage of monofilament nets since the prohibition on carriage of these nets came into force; and how many prosecutions are pending.

Mr. John MacKay: None. There is one case currently under investigation and the skipper has accordingly been cautioned.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Grimsby fishing vessels have been boarded, photographed and inspected in ports in the last month in Scotland and in fishing waters controlled by his Department.

Mr. John MacKay: We do not keep records by port of origin and to do so would add disproportionately to our costs without improving enforcement significantly.

Housing Organisations

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future relationship between the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I have today published a consultation paper "Scottish Homes—A New Agency for Housing in Scotland". The task of this agency would be to promote and assist the development of housing in Scotland and to build on the successes of the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation in Scotland. I expect Scottish Homes to operate in a flexible way and, more specifically, work towards the greater use of private finance in the provision of housing; to give tenants a greater choice in housing through diversification of tenure and ownership; and to form close partnerships with local authorities, housing associations and other landlords to improve housing, include large single-tenure local authority housing estates.

This new agency, which would replace both SSHA and the Housing Corporation in Scotland, would be an enabling and funding body with wide powers and a wide remit. The consultation paper also suggests that the new body should, under appropriate arrangements, take over the SSHA housing stock and also those functions which the Housing Corporation itself undertakes for Scotland.

I commend the proposals in the consultation document for careful study by all interests concerned with the future of Scottish housing and I shall be glad to receive and consider their views.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Police Complaints

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were arrested by the police in Northern Ireland in 1986 under emergency legislation, and under other arrest powers; how many in each category complained whilst in police custody of irregular conduct by police officers during interview procedures; how many of any such complaints in each category were not subsequently pursued by complainants with the Police Complaints Board; and what proportion of those persons were arrested under emergency legislation who alleged irregular conduct by police officers during interview procedures were at the time being interviewed at *(a)* Castlereagh and *(b)* Gough police offices, respectively.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many women in Northern Ireland were in receipt of maternity allowance grant for each year since 1978; and what proportion of those numbers will continue to receive state aid when the new Government regulations come into force.

Mr. Needham: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the number of £25 maternity grants paid was as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Grants*
1978	24,040
1979	25,300
1980	25,590
1981	25,870
1982	[1]25,056
1983	27,653
1984	26,293
1985	26,682
1986	26,092
1987	22,705

[1] Estimated.

It is estimated that some 12,400 maternity payments at £80 will be made from the social fund during the year ending 31 March 1988.

Children in Care

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what number of children were in care in Northern Ireland for each year since 1978; and what proportion they were of the total number of children in Northern Ireland for each year since 1978.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is given in the table below for the years 1978-85, the latest year for which figures are available.

Children in care of the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Boards under section 103 of the Children and Young Persons Act (NI) 1968 or under a Fit Person Order under that Act at 31 December.

Year	*Total number of children in care*	*Rate per 1000 population aged under 18*
1978	2,021	3·9
1979	2,127	4·2
1980	2,444	4·8
1981	2,584	5·1
1982	2,559	5·2
1983	2,547	5·2
1984	2,448	5·0
1985	2,512	5·2

Abortions

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what number of women died as a result of illegal abortions in Northern Ireland for each year since 1977.

Mr. Needham: In the years 1977 to 1985 there was one such death; in 1982.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been spent on cervical cancer screening in Northern Ireland for every year since 1978; and what is the projected expenditure for each year up until 1990.

Mr. Needham: This information is not available as it is not possible to separate cervical cancer screening from other components of health service running costs. The Government are however, committed to an expansion of the cervical cancer screening service and to the introduction of a computerised call and recall system in the current financial year. Additional resources of £400,000 a year are being made available for 1987-88 to meet the extra laboratory, staffing, computer and administrative costs of the expanded service.

AFP Test

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what proportion of pregnant women in Northern Ireland were given the AFP test for each year since 1978.

Mr. Needham: The information is not recorded in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Spina Bifida

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what proportion of babies in Northern Ireland were born with spina bifida for each year since 1978, broken down in terms of live and still births.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Year	*Live spina bifida births*	*Rate per 1,000 live births*	*Still spina bifida births*	*Rate per 1,000 still births*
1978	72	2·7	10	40·3
1979	67	2·4	19	74·8
1980	50	1·8	17	65·6
1981	52	1·9	18	75·3
1982	50	1·9	12	61·2
1983	41	1·5	7	36·1

Note: 1983 is the most recent year for which information on spina bifida births is available.

Detained Persons

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland of those persons arrested by the police under emergency legislation in 1986 in Northern Ireland *(a)* how many asked for access to a legal adviser during the first 48 hours in custody following arrest, *(b)* how many asked for access after the first 48 hours in custody and *(c)* how many requests were granted, respectively.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Land (Dungannon)

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will establish an inquiry into the use which has been made of his Department's grant in relation to the transaction of land between Dungannon district council and Tyrone Development Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I am satisfied as to the use which has been made of the Department of the Environment's grant and do not consider that an inquiry is necessary.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from members of Dungannon district council expressing concern over a land deal involving the council and Tyrone Development Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In December 1986 I received a letter from a member of Dungannon district council expressing concern about the Dungannon Park Farm project.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce increases in the suckler cow premium.

Mr. Viggers: The rate of suckler cow premium payable in 1987 will be decided and announced closer to the time when applications are due.

Urban Development Grant

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from what date the urban development grant to Newry and Armagh will be paid.

Mr. Needham: The International Fund for Ireland board announced on 15 April 1987 that it would support an urban development programme for towns in Northern Ireland including Newry and Armagh. This will involve the extension of the existing urban development grant scheme to these towns. The Department, with the agreement of the board, will advertise the terms of the extended scheme shortly.

Milk

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has plans to seek to have the co-responsibility levy on milk production reduced or abolished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: No. Within the latest round of price-fixing negotiations the Commission propose no change in levels of co-responsibility levy. Although the United Kingdom has been opposed to the levy on principle its continuation is considered acceptable until such times as levels of dairy produce in intervention stocks fall to a more realistic level.

Housing

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are on the housing waiting list in the Armagh urban area and Keady urban area.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available; I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to how many new houses are to be built in the Armagh urban area and the Keady area 1987-88 year.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available; I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Pigs

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to introduce headage payments for pig production.

Mr. Viggers: There are no plans to introduce a system of headage payments for pig production.

Beef

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce a reduction in the delay for beef intervention payments from 140 days.

Mr. Viggers: This is a matter for decision by the European Commission.

Anglo-Irish Beef (International) Ltd.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Anglo-Irish Beef (International) Ltd., Newry, has applied for grants for 16 to 18-year-olds soon to be employed there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Canoeing

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consult the water authorities regarding the implications of the expansion of canoeing activity for the operation of the Freshwater Fisheries Acts, with particular reference to disturbance of rivers and the impact on freshwater fish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: If there were any significant impact of canoeing activity in the state of freshwater fish stocks or on the operation of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, I would expect the water authorities to draw it to my attention. They have not done so and my understanding is that there is at present no general problem on either account. The question of mutually acceptable arrangements for the use of rivers for angling, canoeing and other sports is essentially a matter for local consultation.

Farming (Retirement)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his policy towards direct income aids for farmers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on measures encouraging retirement from farming within the EEC.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his replies*, 5 and 6 May 1987]: At present, nationally paid direct income aids for farmers are incompatible with articles 92 to 94 of the treaty. However, the Commission has just published proposals on this subject which also include measures to encourage early retirement from farming in the Community. It would be premature to comment until we have had the opportunity to study these proposals.

Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the price, in terms of pence per pound, at which the EEC management committee of the common agricultural policy agreed to the sale of 181,000 tonnes of butter to the Soviet Union under regulation 765/86 at its March meeting; and what will be the cost which the EEC will require to fund after 1989 when member states are repaid the sums involved in subsidising these exports.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: The price set by the Commission in the light of the advice of the milk management committee was 211 ecu/tonne. Converted to sterling at the current green rate this is equivalent to about 6p per lb. Sales of butter under regulation 765/86 no longer qualify for export refunds but are still subject to MCAs. Because of the large negative United Kingdom MCA the effective price out of United Kingdom stores would have been about 20p per lb had any butter been sold from the United Kingdom. In fact the majority of the butter sold came from Germany and the Netherlands, where, because of the relative strengths of the green currencies involved, the effective price to traders was approximately 8p per lb.

The total amount on the sale of this butter which will be reimbursed to the Member States concerned after 1989 is about £329 million at current United Kingdom green rates.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the representative of Her Majesty's Government serving on the management committee of the Common Market's agricultural policy supported the decision to extend the scope of regulation 2409/86 to enable the subsiding of butter sales for experimental industrial uses; and if he will make a statement setting out the possible experimental industrial uses which the committee had in mind and the price, in terms of pence per pound, at which butter will be made available for these experimental industrial purposes.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: Regulation 2409/86 was introduced to enable the oldest stocks of intervention butter, for which no other outlets was likely, to be sold for use in animal feed. But given the disppointingly low level of returns under this scheme and a number of inquiries from potential purchasers for other non-food uses, the Commission has decided to make available a limited quantity of butter at the animal feed price of just over 2p per lb in order to evaluate these possibilities. The United Kingdom supported this approach in principle in the hope that it may result in a less expensive stock disposal policy, but we abstained on the detail of the proposed experimental arrangements, as we felt that the two month period specified would not allow sufficient time for proper assessment of the results and as there were other unsatisfactory points in the text. The regulation as amended invites interested parties to submit projects to the Commission for prior approval. No particular uses are envisaged in the regulation itself, but the ideas previously suggested to the commission include use in cosmetics, as a high-grade fuel additive or in paint.

Fishing

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangement he provides for British vessels to fish off the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: The licensing arrangements for fishing in the Falklands are a matter for the Falkland Islands Government. The scheme to provide support for exploratory voyages and joint ventures will continue under the new structural measures which I announced in my written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) on 30 April.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his policy towards seeking to reduce expenditure on the common agricultural policy in the light of the calculations of its cost to the average family contained in the recent evidence by the consumers in the European Community Group (UK) to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, a copy of which has been sent to him; and what is his Department's latest estimate of the cost of the common agricultural policy per average family.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987]: The Government's consistent pressure for a sustained policy of restrictive CAP prices has already brought significant results. Since 1979, the level of retail food prices in the United Kingdom has risen more slowly than the general level of prices, and of average earnings.

Any estimate of the costs of the CAP can be attempted only if assumptions are made about the alternative policy that would be operated. It is inconceivable that agriculture would go unsupported in the absence of the CAP. Any estimate which does not take proper account of that cannot be realistic. I am not prepared to speculate about such a hypothetical situation.

Shellfish

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been undertaken or commissioned by his Department into the bioaccumulation of metals in shellfish in estuaries as a result of acid deposition; and what were the findings.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987]: The research programme of my Department covers the bioaccumulation of metals in fish and shellfish from all sources. Present levels are generally lower than those found previously.

Sugar

Mr. Spearing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all forms of subsidy, assistance or other financial support available to the beet sugar industry and not available to cane sugar refineries.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987]: Refiners of ACP cane sugar do not receive storage refunds, but similarly they do not pay storage levies. ACP cane sugar refined in the Community is not eligible for sale into intervention. The main difference however between the two sectors is that the beet processing margin is calculated on a more satisfactory basis than the cane refining margin. In this respect I secured an undertaking from the European Commission at the Agriculture Council on 24/25 March 1986 to review the cane refining margin and report back to the Council. I expect the Commission to make its report in the near future.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8 May 1987

ENERGY

Coal Mining (Subsidence)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is yet in a position to publish his response to the Waddilove committee on coal mining subsidence compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government are still finalising the terms of their response, which will be published as soon as practicable.

Energy Management Companies

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in classifying guidance to public sector bodies in the use of contract energy management companies.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Treasury and Department of Energy have issued a guidance note to other Government Departments on contract energy management. I believe the guidance to be an important step forward in the Government campaign to increase energy efficiency in the public sector, where potential savings total at least £400 million. The guidance emphasises that cost-effective energy efficiency measures should be encouraged and explains that contract energy management may well be an attractive option; it promotes worthwhile collaboration between the skills of the private and public sector, and guarantees improved energy management at no risk to the public sector.

The guidance makes clear that there are a range of options for improving energy efficiency. Contract energy management schemes are to be welcomed when they provide the best value for money.

Because they may provide an alternative means of financing energy efficiency capital investment, adjustments might also be required to public expenditure control totals where CEMs are used, to ensure consistent treatment with other directly funded schemes. The guidance describes what the adjustment should be, and when they are necessary.

The guidance will be kept under review in the light of experience. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. The Energy Efficiency Office will continue to encourage the public sector to take up the opportunities offered by investment in the more efficient use of energy.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Handicapped Students

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he intends to take in response to the survey of provisions for students with special educational needs in further and higher education undertaken for his Department by the National Bureau for Handicapped Students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: This survey report was commissioned by my right hon. Friend to provide the first full statistical summary of students with special educational needs in maintained, assisted and grant-aided institutions of further and higher education, and the courses provided for them. The Government intend to update this information periodically. They have been aware of developments in this area and have already taken related initiatives. A working group was set up last year to consider the training needs of further education college staff concerned with students with special needs, and its report will be published in the summer. Training for certain categories of such staff and local education authority staff has been made a national priority area under the LEA training grants scheme announced last year. An earlier initiative funded by the Government provided in 1985 a resource pack for teachers of students with special needs in colleges of further education. And the further education unit, which the Government fund, has also undertaken much valuable work in the special needs field in recent years, including the publication of guidance to colleges.

University of Wales

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table giving the numbers of United Kingdom students who were awarded degrees and diplomas from the University of Wales in the following subjects in the years 1979 and 1986, or the most recent year for which figures are available *(a)* social, administrative and business studies, *(b)* engineering and technology and *(c)* science.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Butler Report

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science for what reason publication of the Butler report on geological surveying has been delayed.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Natural Environment Research Council, which jointly commissioned the study group into geological surveying chaired by Sir Clifford Butler, received the report on 29 April. It is for those two bodies to decide on what recommendation to make to my right hon. Friend concerning publication.

University Funding

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of revised cash limits for his Department's Votes in respect of university funding in 1987-88.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit on class XII, vote 3 is being revised to take account of the increased provision of £40 million for the restructuring of academic staff pay announced to the House on 5 March at column 671-672; and of a further increase of £3·250 million in respect of the pay award to clinical academic staff. This increase takes account of the treatment given to

the hospital and community health service in respect of the recommendations of the doctors and dentists review body. The effect of these changes is as follows:

	£'000
Class	XII
Vote	3
Description of Expenditure	Universities, etc
Current Cash Limit	1,664,683
Revision	+43,250
Revised Cash Limit	1,707,933

The increase of £43·25 million will be charged to the Reserve, so will not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Education Reforms

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the educational reforms instituted since May 1979 together with any changes in the level of resources available to the education system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *307*]: The Government's policies for raising educational standards in schools were set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9649). We are seeking improvements in the school curriculum, including the establishment of a national foundation curriculum, to secure achievement by all pupils across a broad range of subjects necessary to prepare them better for adult and working life.

We have given financial support to promote technical and vocational education for 14-18-year-olds in schools and colleges and supported programmes for lower attaining pupils.

We have introduced the GCSE to improve examinations at 16 and are introducing the AS level to broaden sixth form studies. We are developing records of achievement for all school leavers.

The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 promotes the more effective management of maintained schools by in particular enhancing the role of governing bodies and the influence of parents. We have announced plans for the first two of a number of city technology colleges to be established in urban areas. The proportion of 3 and 4-year-olds at school has increased from 37 per cent. in 1979 to 43 per cent. in 1986. Spending per primary pupil has risen 17 per cent. in real terms; spending per secondary school pupil has risen 20 per cent. in real terms. The pupil-teacher ratio has improved from just under 19·1 : 1 in 1979 to 17·6 : 1 in 1986. Average class sizes have fallen and there are 41 per cent. fewer classes with over 30 pupils. £40 million is being spent this year on the assisted places scheme which is helping some 25,000 children from less well-off backgrounds to take up places in independent schools.

There are now 157,000 more students in higher education than in 1979 (85,000 full-time, 72,000 part-time). The number of mature students entering higher education has risen by 25,000 since 1979 and stands at 42,000. This has been achieved without loss of quality and with a higher proportion studying science and engineering, thanks partly to the Government's information technology initiative and engineering and technology programme. The number of science and engineering graduates has risen 30 per cent. since 1979. Greater cost-effectiveness has been achieved, especially in the polytechnics where unit costs have fallen substantially. the funding of universities now includes greater selectivity in the interest of concentrating support for research on the best centres. The Open University has increased its range of courses, especially in technology and in continuing education, and is admitting more students. Further major reforms to be implemented over the next few years were announced in the recent higher education White Paper.

In further education, development plans have been introduced with gains in relevance and efficiency. Course and qualification patterns continue to evolve, including the certificate of pre-vocational education, which the Government launched in 1983. Greater cost-effectiveness has been pursued through the NAFE joint efficiency study, the promotion of better management information systems and otherwise: student/staff ratios in the sector are being steadily tightened without loss of quality or opportunity. Across further and higher education the Government's professional, industrial and commercial updating programme has helped secure a big increase in work-related continuing education and is continuing its success.

The work of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education is leading to improvements in initial teacher training, and new specific grant support for in-service teacher training is being introduced in 1987-88. The introduction of special bursaries and the establishment of teaching as a career unit are helping to improve the supply of teachers in shortage subjects. Education support grants are now well established.

The Government's plans provide for total public expenditure on education in the United Kingdom of £19.6 billion in 1987-88, more than double the equivalent figure for 1978-79.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Deaf and Dumb Children (St. Helena)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the education of deaf and dumb children in St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: An ODA supported specialist visited St. Helena in 1985 and 1986 to help establish a programme of special education for such children. Since then the St. Helena Government have reported good progress. A St. Helenian teacher is currently studying for a certificate in education (teaching of hearing-impaired children) at Oxford polytechnic. She will become one of the island's new co-ordinators for children with special needs when she returns to St. Helena later this year.

WALES

EEC Visits

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has visited Brussels since he took office to discuss Welsh agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have visited Brussels on a number of occasions to discuss Welsh agriculture. Apart from the negotiations on the sheepmeat regime in which I took part, the United Kingdom's representation in

discussions with European Community Ministers on the common agriculture policy is effectively led by a single Minister and takes full account of the interests of Wales. A senior official of my Department is normally present on these occasions to advise on specifically Welsh interests.

Physical and Sensory Disabilities

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total annual expenditure by social services departments in Wales on people with physical and sensory disabilities in each of the last 10 years at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Rural Schools

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy on rural schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend's policy on rural schools is that they should provide the best possible quality of education for children in rural areas. The Welsh Office is supporting, through education support grants, projects to improve the quality and range of the curriculum provided in rural schools. We are also supporting research undertaken by Powys local education authority into the effectiveness of ways of providing support to small rural schools.

I have consulted interested bodies on a draft circular on the organisation of school provision: "Providing for Quality: the Pattern of Organisation to Age 19" and I am considering the comments received.

Where proposals for the closure of rural schools come before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales they are decided on the merits of the individual case, taking account of all the evidence and in particular the effects of the proposals on the quality of education provided.

THE ARTS

Education

Mr. Lawrence asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the role of arts organisations, including museums and libraries, in education and in particular in the general certificate of secondary education syllabuses.

Mr. Luce: I am convinced of the importance of the role that the arts and heritage can play in the provision of education and specifically in the GCSE syllabuses and wider development of the curriculum. This is a major opportunity to be grasped by museums, libraries and performing arts organisations for the future. My discussions with arts organisations around the country have indicated a keen awareness of the role they can play.

I am pleased to have had reports of the very active stance being taken by museums in the public and private sectors towards the GCSE. The facilities which museums and galleries have to offer are highly relevant to the new GCSE syllabuses, and my Department has sought to promote the linkage between museums and the education establishment in order to optimise the use of museums' resources. I welcomed a report by HMI, following a study in the north-west of England, which recommended schools to use museums and art galleries to interest and inspire pupils, and as part of new activity-based syllabus work. My Department, in consultation with HMI, has circulated to the area museum councils practical guidance on the GCSE and their prospective role in new syllabuses. I am delighted to learn that museums have reported a high level of demand from all parts of the country for GCSE-related visits.

In the field of the contemporary arts, a vital opportunity also exists for the arts—drama, literature, music, art and crafts—to play an important role in personal education and within the developing curriculum. The Arts Council, the British Film Institute and the Crafts Council each have education sections concerned to increase awareness in schools and colleges of the importance of the arts. Various schemes exist to bring the arts to education, for instance the project work of the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations undertaken in association with educational authorities and individual schools.

The library services also play a major role in meeting the needs of education within schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities, and in the community. Educational institutions, as well as their students and pupils individually, draw upon the services of the public library system. Public libraries also provide information, publicity, accommodation and support materials for a wide range of courses, and the development of the Open University and of open learning and distance learning has made their role even more vital. Within the educational curriculum, the increasing emphasis on resource-based learning and on the acquisition of information skills is placing additional responsibility on the library system, and presents new opportunities to the young and to adults in education to make use of public library facilities.

I am in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to explore further ways in which the links between arts organisations and education can be strengthened.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Overseas Voters

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) to which branches of the organisation known as Conservatives Abroad overseas registration documents have been supplied;

(2) by whom the review of the need for guidance on the distribution methods of overseas electors' declaration forms referred to in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West on 22 April, *Official Report*, column *531*, is being carried out.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Overseas electors' declarations forms were distributed widely by our diplomatic missions. Information is not available centrally on all the bodies which received copies of the forms, but in practice missions would have supplied copies to any body, including a branch of Conservative Abroad, which requested them.

Police Overtime (Solihull)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to how the police

overtime resources at the disposal of the chief superintendent of police in Solihull in respect of D division compares with comparable forces and as to the extent to which overtime worked by Solihull police officers is actually discharged in other boroughs in the west midlands.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The chief constable has informed me that in the financial year 1986-87 a total of 37,617 hours' overtime was worked by police officers in the Solihull divisions at a cost of £299,176. Information on the extent to which overtime worked by Solihull police officers is actually discharged in other boroughs of the west midlands could only be obtained at disproportionate cost, and attempts to compare a division in one force with other forces would not be of value.

MV Earl William

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much the ferry Earl William is costing to hire; how long it will be moored at Harwich; what regulations it is subject to; how many and what categories of detainees will be detained there; what will be the total weekly cost of keeping detainees on the ferry; and if he will make a statement;

(2) from which detention centres those detainees to be detained on the ferry, the Earl William moored at Harwich, are to be transferred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Burglaries (Merseyside)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the detection rate for burglaries in the Merseyside police authority area between: *(a)* 1975 and 1979 and *(b)* 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In Merseyside the average ratio of offences of burglary cleared up to offences of burglary recorded by the police was 36·5 per cent. in 1975-79, compared with 37·5 per cent. in 1979-86.

Vietnamese Refugees

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is proposing to alleviate the problems caused by the continuing flow of Vietnamese refugees to Hong Kong.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a statement on his plans regarding possible admission of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong in 1987.

Mr. Hurd: This Government have an excellent record of participation in international efforts to relieve the problems caused by the outflow of Vietnamese to Hong Kong and elsewhere in south-east Asia.

Between 1979 and 1981 we accepted for settlement here, following the initial surge of departures from Vietnam, nearly 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees of whom over 12,000 were Vietnamese from Hong Kong. Subsequently we continued to accept Vietnamese but applied the normal immigration rules governing family reunion. In 1985, however, following a recommendation by the Home Affairs Committee's Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, we agreed to accept around 500 Vietnamese (50 of whom were not from Hong Kong) whose family relationship with those already here did not meet the normal criteria. Following that agreement, some 1,200 further offers of individual resettlement from Hong Kong were made by other countries.

We have now considered what further steps might be taken against a background of the need on the one hand to maintain tight immigration controls and, on the other, to do everything possible to help Hong Kong. We have concluded that we should take a further number of Vietnamese from Hong Kong as a contribution to reducing the population in the camps in Hong Kong both as a contribution to reducing the population in the camps in Hong Kong and to give a signal to other resettlement countries of our continuing commitment to Hong Kong. We have decided therefore to accept for settlement here 468 named individuals who have been identified as close relatives of those already here. They will be resettled at a rate of about 20 a month spread over almost two years to ensure that our reception facilities are not overstretched. We believe that as in the past, other countries are likely to follow suit and offer a substantial number of further resettlement places for Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. We shall be making every effort to persuade them to do so. We do not, however, consider that resettlement alone is a sufficient answer to Hong Kong's refugee problem. Concerted international action aimed at a durable solution to the problem is required and, to this end, we shall be seeking to put to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the main resettlement countries the case for a common approach. In doing so we shall stress our own continuing commitment to Hong Kong of which the resettlement commitment announced today is clear evidence.

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evaluative research is available to his Department on the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have received a summary of the results of an evaluation of the effect of two schemes, one in Acton, the other in Wimbledon. This research was funded by the Home Office and was carried out by the Cambridge Institute of Criminology. Crime and attitude surveys were carried out in both areas before the schemes were launched in 1985 and again after 12 months. Although there was no evidence of a change in crime levels as measured by the crime surveys, the attitude surveys showed a decrease in the fear of household crime, an improvement in residents' involvement with others in home protection, a reduction in fear of crime for females and an increase in social cohesion.

I also understand that Merseyside police manpower development unit has completed an evaluation of four of its home watch schemes. This shows a substantial decrease in recorded burglary in three of the areas as well as a decrease in total recorded crime.

Prisons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have access to integral

sanitation; how many are obliged to slop out; what plans he has to improve toilet facilities in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 May 1987, c. *314*]: According to the most recent information available to us (which relates to the number of certified places rather than to the total number of inmates), about 19,000 places have sanitary facilities and 22,270 do not. All new inmate accommodation will contain access to sanitation. In existing establishments, we are increasing the number of places with sanitary facilities in the course of our substantial refurbishment programme.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

North Atlantic Assembly

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the United Kingdom parliamentary delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly.

Mr. Renton: The following represent the United Kingdom at the North Atlantic Assembly:

Sir Patrick Wall MP (Leader)
Mr. Roberts Banks MP
Mr. John Browne MP
Sir Peter Emery MP
Sir Philip Goodhart MP
Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith MP
Mr. Robert McCrindle MP
Sir Julian Ridsdale MP
Mr. Jerry Wiggin MP
Earl of Kimberley
Earl de la Warr
Mr. David Clark MP
Mr. Patrick Duffy MP
Mr. Bruce George MP
Mr. Kevin MacNamara MP
Lord Ardwick
The Right Honourable Lord Mayhew
Mr. John Cartwright MP

My right hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) is a substitute member of the delegation.

EMPLOYMENT

HFW Plastics, Gateshead

Mr. Clelland asked the Paymaster General (1) what was the nature of the involvement of the Manpower Services Commission in the recent recruitment of workers at HFW Plastics of Albany road, Gateshead;

(2) what financial support is being given to HFW Plastics of Gateshead by his Department; and for what purpose.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Proctor asked the Paymaster General if, in the light of the recommendations by Sir Frank Layfield in the report of the Sizewell public inquiry concerning further work to be undertaken by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate, he will indicate what discussions he has arranged with the director general of the Health and Safety Executive on the resources implications of such further work; when he expects to be informed of such resource implications; if he will publish a report of the potential resources implications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Age Concern (Scheme)

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General why the Manpower Services Commission has reduced the funding of the Age Concern scheme in St. John's centre, Stourbridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Construction Equipment

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will make a statement on the background to the case currently being heard by the Fair Competition Committee in Brussels which refers to the anti-competitive implications of the United Kingdom proposal contained in CON (LO) 1981/82 which deals with the use of excavators as cranes;

(2) if he will make a statement outlining the case which Her Majesty's Government will be putting forward in Brussels in support of condition 6 of CON (LO) 1981/82 when the matter is considered by the Fair Competition Committee;

(3) if his Department has made or received any estimate of the cost to the United Kingdom construction industry of the reduced performance which would result from the fitting of restrictive check valves to construction equipment as required by CON (LO) 1981/82; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Deregulation

Mr. Cash asked the Paymaster General when he plans to publish a report on the progress made on deregulation since the publication of the White Paper, "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers," Cmnd. 9794 in May 1986.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A report to Parliament is being published today, setting out the progress that the Government have made over the last year to reduce the impact of regulation on business. Copies of the report, "Encouraging Enterprise", and a summary leaflet entitled "Lightening the Load", have been placed in the Library and are available from the Vote Office. We intend to make the leaflet widely available to the business community. Copies of the full report will be available on request from the enterprise and deregulation unit.

The report reviews the experience of the arrangements that have been set up to pursue the deregulation initiative across Government and, in particular, the procedures for assessing the cost to business of new proposals. It sets out the valuable progress that has been made at European level to tackle red tape. The report also gives a detailed account of action by Government Departments over the past year, and sets out a number of new proposals for future action. In his foreword to the report my right hon. and noble Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment

makes clear the Government's continuing commitment to reducing the burden of regulation and identifies a number of priorities for the future.

Women's Skills Centre (Tyneside)

Mr. Garrett asked the Paymaster General if he will continue to assist in the funding of the Tyneside women's non-traditional skills centre.

Mr. Tracey: I have been asked to reply.

The Tyneside women's non-traditional skills centre is jointly funded by the five district councils in Tyne and Wear. In 1985-86, the Department agreed to provide urban programme grant to assist in the funding of the centre and this funding will continue to be made available if it is required by the local authorities.

TRANSPORT

Public Transport, London

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about public transport in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend receives representations from time to time on various aspects of public transport in London. Detailed matters concerning services are the responsibility of the operator concerned.

Helicopters (Stornoway)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *224*, he will state precisely when he anticipates the Sikorsky S61N mark II helicopter will be on station at Stornoway; what operations the standard S61N machine will be able to perform at night until it is replaced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The precise date when the definitive Sikorsky S61N mark II will be based at Stornoway is dependent on acquisition, installation and thorough testing of certain specialised avionics equipment, which, presently being unique to the Sumburgh helicopter, is not available off the shelf. However, the fully fitted aircraft is expected to be available for service in the autumn prior to the onset of winter weather.

In the meantime it is considered more satisfactory to place a standard S61N at Stornoway with suitably upgraded navigational and rescue equipment rather than have no facility at all. The only limitation to the interim aircraft operating effectively in most respects at night is the availability to the pilot of external references and good horizons for hovering; such a limitation is not particularly restrictive during the long hours of daylight during the summer and the relatively low incidence of thick weather.

Road Safety Review

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the Government's road safety review will be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have today sent a copy of the Review to the Chairman of the Transport Committee and will be placing copies in the Library of both Houses.

The main conclusions in the report are

—there is no simple formula for solving the problem of road accident casualties;
—there needs to be a deeper understanding in society of the existing dangers on the road and how to tackle them;
—more research is required, both to expand knowledge of the human factors at work in road accidents, and to develop insights for future progress;
—the key task is the substantive reduction of casualties among vulnerable road users occurring on roads in urban areas;
—the key strategy is the redirection of available resources towards measures—existing and potential, national and local—which are demonstrably cost-effective in terms of casualty reduction, particularly in the fields of road and vehicle safety engineering.

Wheelchair Passengers

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport which existing construction and United Kingdom regulations apply to community transport vehicles used for conveying wheelchair-bound passengers; if he intends to introduce fresh regulations applying only to new vehicles of this type; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1987, c. *525*]: The department has now completed a revised version of the code (which was first published in 1982) in consultation with manufacturers and other interested organisations. It will be printed shortly.

The purpose of the code is to give detailed guidance on safe practice for the boarding, securing and carrying of wheelchairs and wheelchair bound passengers in minibuses and buses. We shall be encouraging voluntary groups and other operators to make the greatest possible use of the code in planning their purchase, hire or adaptation of vehicles. We have chosen to issue guidance rather than making new regulations, because of the need to avoid inhibiting innovation in an area in which new equipment is being developed and because many serviceable older vehicles cannot economically be improved to meet all the detailed provisions. The code will be available for the mobility roadshow on 12 June at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory where many of the latest vehicles and equipment for carrying people in wheelchairs will be on display.

DEFENCE

Engagements

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his official engagements for Monday 4 May.

Mr. Younger: I spent the day in my constituency and returned to London in the evening.

Search and Rescue (Privatisation)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has received from commercial companies advocating privatisation of the search and rescue services provided by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy; and whether he is giving consideration to these proposals.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has received proposals from Bristow Helicopters Limited advocating the transfer of responsibility for United Kingdom search and rescue helicopter units to civil contractors. These are being given careful consideration.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates when the high level group, the nuclear planning group, and the Defence Planning Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation each agreed to support the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell by the United States in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates when the high level group, the nuclear planning group and the Defence Planning Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation each agreed to support the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell by the United States in Germany.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1987, c. *301-2*]: The discussions of the high level group, nuclear planning group and Defence Planning Committee are classified. I cannot add to the public communiqués issued after NPG and DPC meetings.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has received from the United States authorities as to which variant of the W-79 nuclear shell has been deployed by the United States in Europe;

(2) what information he has received from the United States authorities regarding the deployment of W-79 nuclear shells with those United States custodial units which support the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he was informed by the United States authorities of the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell in Germany; and when he was first informed of the United States intention to carry out the deployment;

(4) what information he has received from the United States authorities about the deployment by the United States Army of W-79 nuclear warheads in the NORTHAG area of NATO;

(5) what information he has as to when deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell by the United States of America in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation commenced.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has received from the United States authorities as to which variant of the W-79 nuclear shell has been deployed by them in Europe; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he was informed by the United States authorities of the deployment of the W-79 nuclear shell in Germany; and when he was first informed of the United States intention to carry out the deployment;

(3) what information he has as to when deployment of the W-79 by the United States in Europe commenced;

(4) what information he has received from the United States authorities about the deployment of W-79 nuclear shells with those United States custodial units which support the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what information he has received from the United States authorities about the deployment by the United States Army of W-79 nuclear warheads in the Northern Army Group area of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his replies*, 1 May 1987, c. *301-2*, and 5 May 1987, c. *364*]: I refer the hon. Members to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 22 April at column *588* and on 27 April at column *28*. Information exchanges between Her Majesty's Government and the United States authorities on nuclear matters are confidential.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the grades and ranks of the civil servants and military officers who attend each of the following North Atlantic Treaty Organisation bodies: the High Level Group, the Special Consultative Group, the Nuclear Planning Group, the Study Group of the Nuclear Planning Group and the Defence Planning Committee.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the grades and ranks of the civil servants and military officers who attend each of the following North Atlantic Treaty Organisation bodies: the high level group, the special consultative group, the nuclear planning group, the study group of the nuclear planning group and the Defence Planning Committee.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his replies*, 1 May 1987, c. *307* and 5 May 1987, c. *364*]: The Secretary of State for Defence heads the UK delegation to the Defence Planning Committee and the nuclear planning group and is supported by a team of senior officials and serving officers, whose composition may vary from meeting to meeting, drawn from the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UK delegation to NATO in Brussels. The DPC and NPG also meet at regular intervals between ministerial sessions at permanent representative level. The senior UK representative on the high level group is a grade 2 official from the Ministry of Defence and, for the special consultative group, a senior trade official from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. They are supported by teams of officials and serving officers drawn from both Departments. The UK representative on the nuclear planning group staff group is a grade 7 official.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government's approval is required prior to the allocation of W-79 nuclear warheads by the United States to its custodial units supporting the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government's approval is required prior to the allocation of W-79 nuclear warheads by the United States to its custodial units supporting the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his replies*, 1 May 1987, c. *302* and 5 May 1987, c. *364*]: Modernisation of any United States nuclear warheads allocated to the British Army of the Rhine would require the approval of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has received from the United States Authorities regarding their deployment of the W70-4 variant of the nuclear warhead for Lance in Germany;

(2) what information he has received from the United States Authorities concerning a potential enhanced radiation capability in relation to the W-79 nuclear shell deployed by the United States of America in Europe.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has received from the United States Authorities regarding the deployment of the W70-4 variant of the nuclear warhead for Lance in Germany;

(2) what information he has received from the United States Authorities concerning a potential enhanced radiation capability in relation to the W-79 nuclear shell deployed by the United States of America in Europe.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his replies*, 1 May 1987, c. *302* and 5 May 1987, c. *364*]: Information exchanges between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Authorities on nuclear matters are confidential. There have been no deployments of enhanced radiation weapons to Europe, nor has NATO any plans to introduce these weapons into Europe.

ENVIRONMENT

Freshwater Biological Association

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the proposed closing of the Windermere and River Frame laboratories of the Freshwater Biological Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has received some 20 representations about the future of the Freshwater Biological Association. The association is, however, an independent body grant-aided by the Natural Environment Research Council which is a responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Estuarial Developments

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on granting permission for developments which, in the opinion of the Nature Conservancy Council, would cause significant damage to the scientific interest of an estuary which supports nationally or internationally important populations of wild birds.

Mr. Waldegrave: The advice of the Nature Conservancy Council on the conservation implications of proposed development in estuaries of scientific interest is an important consideration which is taken into account with other appropriate factors, before decisions are reached.

Mr. Allen Mckay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will inform the European Commission of the likely implications for bird conservation of development proposals currently relating to those British estuaries which have been designated or identified for designation as special protection areas under European Community Directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds.

Mr. Waldegrave: I see no purpose in doing so.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it a requirement that any application for planning permission relating to a river estuary which has been designated or identified for designation as a special protection area under European Community Directive 79/409 be accompanied by an environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Waldegrave: We published proposals for the implementation of the EC directive on environmental assessment, so far as it applies to projects coming within planning control, in April 1986. The measures necessary to comply with the directive will be taken by 2 July 1988.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the relative importance of Britain's estuaries for international wild bird populations, and list the international conventions on this subject to which Her Majesty's Government adheres.

Mr. Waldegrave: British estuaries provide a substantial proportion of the wintering grounds and staging posts for migratory breeding waterfowl of the Palearctic region. The United Kingdom is a party to the following relevant international conventions:

— The convention of wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat (the Ramsar Convention).
— The convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats (the Berne convention)
— The convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals (the Bonn convention).

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what statements he intends to make to the forthcoming conference of contracting parties to the convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance at Regina, Canada, concerning threats to the importance of estuary sites in the United Kingdom which have been designated or identified for designation under the convention.

Mr. Waldegrave: In preparation for the Regina conference, the Government have submitted to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources a detailed report on the implementation of the Ramsar convention in Great Britain. This includes details of actual and potential changes to areas listed under the convention as wetlands of international importance — including some estuarial areas — and outlines the steps which have been or will be taken in response. I am arranging for copies of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue new guidance to local planning authorities on the importance to nature conservation of river estuaries and the need to protect such sites from damaging development.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no plans to issue further specific advice on this subject. However, we shall shortly be issuing revised and updated advice to local authorities reaffirming the importance we attach to the conservation of the natural heritage generally, and outlining the part which local authorities can play in this process.

Ministerial Speech

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for a copy of the speech by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) to senior industralists on Friday 1 May to be placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I did not deliver a speech to any group of industrialists on Friday 1 May. In the course of constituency engagements, I did have informal discussions with the Bristol Engineering Manufacturers' Association.

"Action for Cities"

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the text of the statement made by the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, the hon. Member for Oxford and Abingdon, at a press conference held in London on 28 April on the subject, "Action for Cities".

Mr. John Patten: A text of the "Action for Cities" presentation held at Limehouse studios on 28 April has been placed in the Library.

River Avon (Fish)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide funds for a research project into the problems affecting fish for survival in the River Avon in Hampshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are a number of proposals for research projects into problems affecting fish in the Hampshire Avon. The Department is willing in principle to support research into these problems but I want to be satisfied that the specific proposals which have been put forward will assist in establishing the nature of the problem and possible solutions. Officials are seeking to reach agreement with other interested parties on the best way forward.

Conference Centre, Harrogate

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answers of 22 April, *Official Report*, columns *644-5*, he will state *(a)* the size of the deferred purchase arrangements entered into by Harrogate BC to finance the construction of a conference centre, and *(b)* the size and timing of the additional conventional borrowing approval given to Harrogate in respect of the deferred purchase arrangement.

Mr. Ridley: I understand that the maximum facility offered by the deferred purchase scheme was £20·25 million. The additional borrowing approval was for a maximum of £16 million and was issued on 18 February 1982.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has had from traders outside enterprise zones about unfair retail competition from within such zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Power Station Emissions

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to control nitrogen oxide emissions from power stations.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have endorsed plans by the Central Electricity Generating Board to begin a major 10-year action programme to install low nitrogen oxide (NOx) burners at the board's 12 largest power stations, at an estimated capital cost of £170 million.

Low-NOx burners technology will also be a requirement for all future fossil-fuel fired power stations, and discussions are taking place with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to determine appropriate standards.

The CEGB estimates that these measures will lead to a reduction in CEGB NOx emissions of nearly 30 per cent. on 1980 levels by the end of the century, despite rising electricity demand. The programme will result in a steady flow of work for boiler manufacturers.

I am particularly glad to be able to announce this programme during the European year of the Environment. It is a worthy contribution and, along with the measures announced last September to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions, shows again our determination to tackle the international problem of air pollution.

I expect today's announcement to be widely welcomed as a trend-setting example to other countries when delegates meet early next week in Geneva to resume negotiations for an international agreement on NOx controls, and at the EC Council of Ministers meeting later this month.

Capital Allocation (Hampshire)

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Hampshire county council about the availability of an additional capital allocation under the arrangements announced in the Department's letter of 26 January about the rate support grant; and what response has been given.

Mr. Chope: Hampshire county council has sought an additional capital allocation in order to assemble a site at Chineham, Basingstoke, which will be sold for private sector development for industrial purposes. My right hon. Friend has decided to make available an additional capital allocation of £1,045,000.

New Towns

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the future of the north-east new towns.

Mr. John Patten: On 22 December 1986 I undertook consultations under section 41 of the New Towns Act 1981 inviting comments on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment's proposals to wind up the new town development corporations of Aycliffe and Peterlee and of Washington on 31 March 1988; to dispose of their remaining assets to the private sector; to give English Estates the opportunity to purchase any unsold industrial assets; and to transfer any remaining assets and liabilities to the Commission for the New Towns.

My right hon. Friend and I have considered carefully the various responses received; we are most grateful to all those who let us have their comments. Having taken these into account, my right hon. Friend confirms his intention to wind-up the two development corporations on 31 March 1988. The necessary order will be made later this year.

My right hon. Friend and I are grateful to the development corporations for the steps they have so far taken in encouraging tenants to purchase their properties and in marketing their assets to the private sector, through, for example, the appointment of agents. We look forward to seeing the results of the marketing exercise. In

assessing these, we shall want to take into account not only the size of the offers made but also the interests of the region.

Where assets are not purchased by the private sector, we continue to take the view that English Estates should have the opportunity to acquire industrial properties and that otherwise the remaining assets and liabilities should be transferred to the Commission for the New Towns.

Radiochemical Inspectorate

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of staff employed by the Radiochemical inspectorate annually since 1979 to 1987; and if he will give the projection for the next two years.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987, c. *462*]: The numbers of professional staff (that is excluding clerical and administrative support staff) dealing with radioactive waste management since 1979 are:

	Number
1979	11
1980	12
1981	16½
1982	19½
1983	20½
1984	18½
1985	25
1986	25
1987	25

Currently 23 of these hold warrants from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

A total of 37 professional posts have been authorised up to 1 April 1988. The number of staff in post will depend on progress with recruitment. No decisions have been taken beyond that date.

Hedgehog Ladders

Mr. Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is given by his Department on the construction of hedgehog ladders.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987, c. *480*]: My Department does not give guidance on the construction of hedgehog ladders. Advice on this matter is provided by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service.

Noxious Emissions

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will outline the technological measures applied between 1970 and 1980 and between 1981 and 1987 at fossil fuel power stations operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board aimed specifically at reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide:

(2) if he will outline the technological measures applied between 1970 and 1980 and between 1987 at fossil fuel power stations operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board aimed specifically at reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides;

(3) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the target for reducing emissions from power stations of sulphur dioxide by 1993 and 1998, respectively; on what year's level those targets are based; what is the Government's policy on reduction of nitrogen oxide emissions from power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987, c. *456*]: The Central Electricity Generating Board is required to use the best practicable means to prevent emissions, and to render them harmless and inoffensive, to the satisfaction of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. In the Inspectorate's view, abatement of sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions has not until recently been practicable. The board has, therefore, been required to construct stacks sufficiently high to ensure that emissions are dispersed and diluted in the air to reduce ground level concentrations of the gases to the minimum. Battersea A and Bankside power stations also operated systems of flue gas desulphurisation up to 1974 and 1981 respectively.

The inspectorate now considers that taking account both of the costs and availability of abatement technology, any new large fossil fuel-fired combustion plant should be equipped with means to limit SO_2 and NOx emissions.

The Government aim to reduce emissions of both SO_2 and NOx by 30 per cent. on 1980 levels by the end of the 1990s, which in the case of SO_2 will imply reductions of about 50 per cent. from 1970. The decision to require new plant to be fitted with appropriate abatement technology will make a contribution to the achievement of these targets, but in addition the Government have authorised the Central Electricity Generating Board to retrofit flue gas desulphurisation equipment to three major power stations and, as indicated in my answer today to the hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) to install low-NOx burners at the board's largest power stations.

The Government have set no targets for specific emission reductions by 1993 and 1998. In negotiations on the draft European Community directive on the control of emissions from large combustion plants, the Belgian Presidency has proposed 1993 and 1998 as dates for target emission reductions, to be achieved on a 1980 base. Negotiations on the directive are continuing, although substantial problems remain for several countries including the United Kingdom.

Land Use

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when, following consultation, he intends to publish a circular on planning and agricultural land.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987, c. 712]: I am publishing today the joint DOE/Welsh Office circular "Development Involving Agricultural Land" (DOE circular 16/87, Welsh Office 25/87). Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Anti-fouling Paint Regulations

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce the date for publication of anti-fouling paint regulations; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *476*]: The Control of Pollution (Anti-fouling Paints and Treatments) Regulations 1987 were laid before the House yesterday. They will come into force on 28 May.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Government Support

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support the agricultural industry.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Farm Animals

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to improve the welfare of farm animals.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Milk Quota

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are the reasons for the cuts in milk quotas; and to what extent Britain contributes to dairy surpluses;

(2) what were the reasons for choosing 1981 as the year on which the United Kingdom's milk quota was based; and if he will estimate the difference from choosing 1983 as the base year.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Butter

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on retaining stocks of butter in intervention.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Bovine Somanotropin

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy on the use of bovine somanotropin.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

New Zealand

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy on the import of agricultural produce from New Zealand.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Discrimination

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken to resist discrimination against British agriculture.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Fertilisers

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy on the supply and use of nitrogenous fertilisers.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Pesticides

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to control the supply and use of pesticides.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Food Safety

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to ensure the safety of food.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Sheepmeat

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support British sheepmeat producers.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Dairy Farming

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support British dairy producers.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Fishing

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support the British fishing industry.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Rural Economy

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to diversify the rural economy.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Farming (Young Entrants)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support young entrants to farming.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Capital Taxes

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government has taken since 1979 to reduce the burden of taxes on capital on farmers.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Marketing

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to promote the marketing of British agricultural produce.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Small Producers

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support small-scale agricultural producers.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Marginal Areas

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support farming in marginal areas.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Beef

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to support British beef producers.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Environment

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to balance the needs of agriculture and the environment.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Tenancies

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures the Government have taken since 1979 to improve agricultural tenancies.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Salmonella

Mr. John Townend asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his assessment of the effectiveness of the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1981 and the Importation of Processed Animal Protein Order 1981 in reducing the incidence of salmonella in processed animal protein.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Children's Food

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what definition of young children he now uses when considering requirements relating to foods sold as being suitable for young children.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Meat and Livestock Commission

Mr. Jackson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to review the Meat and Livestock Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: As part of the Department's ongoing programme for reviewing the non-departmental public bodies, I arranged, with the agreement of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, for a financial management survey of the Meat and Livestock Commission. This study, which was undertaken as an efficiency scrutiny, was started last December. The aim of the scrutiny was to examine the MLC with regard to the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of its operations.

My right hon. Friends and I have now received the scrutineer's report and will be studying its recommendations which will be discussed in full with the Meat and Livestock Commission. I am arranging for copies of the report to be placed in the Library of the House and for it to be published.

Farm and Countryside Initiative

Mr. Jackson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many community programme places have been allocated to the farm and countryside initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I am delighted to inform the House that the farm and countryside initiative has continued to make excellent progress since its launch on 3 February 1986. Indeed, during the past few days not only has the milestone of 2,000 places been passed, but the latest total stands at 2,287 community programme places relating to 119 F and CI projects in England.

In rural areas the value of F and CI in providing jobs for long-term unemployed people and in affording opportunities for schemes to be undertaken which benefit the rural environment and rural communities is now widely recognised. I should like to pay particular tribute to those who have now come forward with suggestions for F and CI projects and to offer my good wishes to all those engaged on such projects.

Hedgehog Ladders

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what resources are made available by his Department for the construction of hedgehog ladders.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1987, c. *473*]: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service offers a wide range of advice to farmers on the protection of wildlife including, for example, the provision of escape routes for small animals when cattle grids are being constructed. Escape routes can normally be provided at little or no extra cost to the farmer.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total annual expenditure by health and social services boards in Northern Ireland on people with physical and sensory disabilities in each of the last 10 years at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Needham: The expenditure of the health and social services boards is not analysed in such a way as would enable the information requested to be separately identified.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in his consultations concerning the extension by order to Northern Ireland of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; if he will host a conference on the Act for voluntary organisations, professional workers and people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Consultations have already been undertaken within the Department of Health and Social Services and other interested Government Departments and the views of health and social services and education and library boards are now being sought. While there are no plans to organise a conference on the lines suggested, initial comments on the Act have also been invited from the Northern Ireland Council on Disability, which acts as an umbrella organisation for voluntary groups concerned with the disabled.

Strip Searching

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry, in March and April 1987, respectively; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being concluded; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely making an appearance in court on remand and in which court, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons;

(2) how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry, in June 1986; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled items or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being concluded; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely making an appearance in court, and in which court, on remand attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons;

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Police Federation

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why he has not consulted the Northern Ireland Police Federation about measures to enhance security in Northern Ireland; and what steps he is now taking to respond to the 13-point proposals on this and related matters made recently to his Department and the Chief Constable by the secretary of the federation.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Member as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

Physical and Sensory Disabilities

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total annual expenditure by social work departments in Scotland on people with physical and sensory disabilities in each of the last 10 years at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. John Mackay: Information available is provided in the following table. Column 1 of the table shows separately the annual gross current expenditure on services provided specifically or primarily for adults with physical disabilities. Column 2 shows the total gross current expenditure on other relevant services used by the groups in question; an expenditure figure for usage of these services by disabled groups alone cannot be identified separately.

Local authority gross expenditure on persons with physical and sensory handicap

At 1986/87 prices — *£000*

	Day Centres and Residential Homes	*Other Relevant Services (see Note 1)*
	1	2
1976-77	5,003	119,159
1977-78	6,080	113,219
1978-79	5,709	127,262
1979-80	5,333	135,252
1980-81	6,285	140,743
1981-82	5,673	141,707
1982-83	5,981	143,194
1983-84	8,051	147,747
1984-85	8,301	147,111
1985-86	8,784	145,046

Note:

[1] Includes expenditure on residential accommodation for the elderly, meals on wheels and lunch clubs. Expenditure on aids to daily living and adaptations to property are included for the years for which

information is available (1983-84 to 1985-86). Expenditure on training, administration and field social work is excluded.
[2] Comparable information for 1986-87 is not yet available.

Pipeline Assembly Yard, Ross-shire

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be in a position to announce his decision over the proposed pipeline assembly yard at Marrich Mhor, near Tain, Ross-shire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: As soon as possible.

Capital Projects

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 5 May, *Official Report*, column *392*, if he will list those capital projects that have received support from his Department since 1983, about which his Department has maintained a record; and what was the expenditure involved in each case.

Mr. Ancram: A list of the kind requested could only be compiled at disproportionate cost. Information about capital projects in Scotland funded by central Government expenditure is available in successive editions of the Supply Estimates for vote XVI (vote XV before 1986-87); and of "Public Expenditure: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme" copies of which were sent to my hon. Friend on publication. Information at project level about Government-supported expenditure by non-departmental public bodies, local authorities and the private sector is not held centrally.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that electoral registration officers release to authorised persons in each constituency in Scotland representing political parties lists of those who have died since the inception of the electoral registers for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: There is no requirement for electoral registration officers to be supplied with, or to maintain, lists of persons who have died; or to supply such lists to the political parties. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to introduce such requirements.

Postal Voters

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many persons registered as postal voters in Scottish constituencies are resident in England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally. Each electoral registration officer is, however, required to make available for public inspection at his office a copy of the records he must keep of persons who have been granted a postal vote, showing the addresses to which their ballot papers are to be sent.

Student Fees

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will announce the fees to be charged to students attending Scottish institutions other than universities in the academic year 1987-88.

Mr. John MacKay For the academic year 1987-88, I have prescribed the following fee levels for home students and for students from other European Community countries on full-time advanced courses in the central institutions and colleges of education (fees for 1986-87 are shown in brackets):

	£	£
Postgraduate courses	1,730	(1,680)
Undergraduate and equivalent courses	556	(536)

Fees for home and other European Community students on courses at local authority colleges are the responsibility of the local authorities. I understand that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has decided to recommend fees as follows:

	£	£
Postgraduate courses	1,730	(1,680)
Advanced full-time courses	556	(536)
Non-advanced full-time courses	360	(325)

For overseas students the Government's policy is that students should pay fees that cover the cost of their education. Local authorities and institutions are free to determine the fees to be charged in accordance with that policy, and in the light of their own circumstances.

I understand that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has decided to recommend to local authorities the folowing fees for students at local authority colleges paying the overseas rate who began their courses on or after 1 September 1980:

	£	£
Advanced courses	3,720	(3,540)
Non-advanced courses	2,055	(1,947)

Prescriptions (Low Income Earners)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has of an increase in the number of patients who are unable to pay for medicines prescribed by their doctor because of low incomes; and what consideration he proposes to give to the suggestion, put to him recently by Greater Glasgow North health council, that pharmacists should mark "not dispensed" on the prescription form as a means of ascertaining the extent of patients declining to pay for medicines.

Mr. John MacKay: There are existing arrangements whereby those on low income can be exempted from prescription charges and no one need therefore be prevented from obtaining prescribed medication on hardship grounds. In the circumstances I do not consider that there is any benefit to be obtained from introducing monitoring arrangements of the kind suggested by Greater Glasgow North health council.

Forestry Commission

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of the Forestry Commission, with biographical details, and their dates for reappointment.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Date on which present appointment ends
Sir David Montgomery *(Chairman)* Landowner and farmer. Prior to his appointment he was Vice Convener of Tayside Regional Council, Vice Chairman of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, a member of the Nature Conservancy Council, and Chairman of the Council's Scottish Committee.	31 August 1989
G. J. Francis *(Deputy Chairman and Director General)* A full-time appointment at Grade 2 level. Professional forestry qualifications. Held various posts in the Forestry Commission since 1954, including Commissioner Operations.	—
D. T. J. Rutherford *(Commissioner, Administration and Finance)* A full-time appointment at Grade 3 level. Professional accountancy qualifications. Management accounting and computing experience in the private sector prior to joining her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1975 where he held various posts including Principal Finance and Establishment Officer.	—
R. T. Bradley *(Commissioner, Private Forestry and Development)* A full-time appointment at Grade 3 level. Professional forestry qualifications. Held various posts in the Forestry Commission since 1960, including Senior Officer for Wales and director for Harvesting and Marketing.	—
D. L. Foot *(Commissioner Operations)* A full-time appointment at Grade 3 level. Professional forestry qualifications. Held various posts in the Forestry Commission since 1961, including Conservator for South Scotland and Director for Harvesting and Marketing.	—
I. D. Coutts *(Part-time Commissioner)* Chartered Accountant with wide commercial and local government experience. Chairman of Norfolk County Council Planning and Transportation Committee.	30 September 1987
G. O. Hutchinson *(Part-time Commissioner)* Timber merchant. The first Chairman of the Timber Research and Development Association's Stress Grading Committee.	30 September 1987
J. D. Pollock *(Part-time Commissioner)* General Secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland. President of the European Committee of the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Professions. Member of Manpower Services Committee Scotland. Chairman of the Scottish Trades Union Congress.	30 September 1988
Captain W. F. E. Forbes *(Part-time Commissioner)* Woodland owner and farmer. Former Chairman of Scottish Woodland Owners' Association. Chairman of Scottish Branch of National Playing Fields Association. Chairman of the Central Scotland Countryside Trust.	30 September 1988
James Forbes *(Part-time Commissioner)* Chartered Accountant with wide business and commercial experience.	31 October 1988
C. R. Woosnam *(Part-time Commissioner)* Woodland owner and farmer in Wales. Chartered Surveyor with wide commercial and local government experience. Prior to his appointment, he was Deputy Chairman of Timber Growers UK.	17 October 1990

SOCIAL SERVICES

Chiropodists

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many chiropodists are employed in each of the health districts within the South Western regional health authority; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1975.

Mr. Newton: The table shows the figures for the years 1982 to 1985 inclusive. I am sorry that I am unable to give my hon. Friend all the information he has asked for. Because of the 1982 National Health Service reorganisation, information for years period to 1982 would not be comparable with those for 1982 and later years.

National Health Service Chiropodists
South Western Regional Health Authority
30 September whole-time equivalent[1]

District Health Authorities	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Bristol and Weston	16	18	16	18
Frenchay	10	11	15	14
Southmead	11	10	12	14
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	20	18	23	18
Exeter	16	24	15	17
North Devon	5	4	5	3
Plymouth	9	10	7	11
Torbay	12	18	16	17
Cheltenham	14	10	11	11
Gloucester	15	16	18	17
Somerset	13	15	16	15
Regional total	142	153	154	154

Source: DHSS Annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
[1] All figures are independently rounded to nearest 1 whole-time equivalent.

Physical and Sensory Disabilities

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total annual expenditure by social services departments in England on people with physical and sensory disabilities in each of the last 10 years at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Tony Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Disability (Assessment)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Disability Alliance concerning the proposed scales for assessing the severity of disability devised by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I have received a copy of a recent letter sent by Professor Peter Townsend on behalf of the Disability Alliance to an official in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, who I understand will reply shortly.

Elderly and Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to empower local authorities to regulate private organisations which provide domiciliary care to elderly and disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Edwina Currie: We welcome the extension of consumer choice provided by the growth of private domiciliary services for elderly and disabled people. We are keeping developments under review but are not aware at present of any need to regulate firms providing these services and have no plans to introduce legislation to this effect.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will issue a directive to health authorities on co-operating with local authorities in carrying out surveys on identifying premises being used by patients with a history of mental illness on being discharged from hospital; (2) why his Department pays enhanced allowances to non-registered establishments which provide housing for people with a history of mental illness after discharge from hospital;

(3) why his Department withdrew support from a pilot survey in Birmingham to identifying the dwellings used by people with a history of mental illness after discharge from hospital;

(4) if he will make a statement on action by his Department following complaints about treatment of people with a history of mental illness after their discharge from hospital into the community by landlords *(a)* restricting access during the day, *(b)* imposing unreasonable curfews, *(c)* overcharging for electricity, *(d)* supplying poor quality bedding, *(e)* making charges for toilet paper, *(f)* offering poor quality and quantities of food and *(g)* misusing Department of Health and Social Security pocket money.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

District Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the gross revenue expenditure of each district health authority in the Greater London area for each of the financial years of their operation since inception at 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS Capital Schemes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 5 May relating to National Health Service capital schemes, if he will list all such information as is available to him in the form of his replies of 10 December 1985, *Official Report*, columns *613-14*.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Health Service Staff (Statistics)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now publish the outturn figures for 1985-86 for compensation payments to National Health Service staff in respect of redundancies and early retirements in the manner described in the Government's reply to the first report from the Social Services Committee of Session 1984-85, breaking down the figures to distinguish between competitive tendering and other cases.

Mrs. Currie: The outturn figures for 1985-86 are as follows:

	Number of cases	*Compensation cost*	*Total cost including superannuation*
		£	£
Competitive tendering			
New cases	1,179	2,133,000	4,766,000
Continuing cases	300	195,000	391,000
Other cases			
New cases	963	2,889,000	10,444,000
Continuing cases	6,847	11,000,000	30,071,000

Cash and Cost Limits

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any changes will be made to cash limits or gross running cost limits for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Newton: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made:

The cash limit for class XIV, vote 1 (Hospital and Community Health and Other Services, England) will be increased by £262,060,000 (from £10,078,558,000 to £10,340,618,000) and that for class XIV, vote 3 (Miscellaneous Health and Personal Social Services, England) by £1,940,000 (from £397,724,000 to £399,664,000). These increases should enable services to continue to be delivered and developed as planned following the decision to implement, from 1 April 1987, the recommendations of the review bodies in respect of doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and professions allied to medicine, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 April 1987.

As a result of these changes, the gross running cost limit of the Department of Health and Social Security is increased by £1,635,000 from £1,699,178,000 to £1,700,813,000.

The public expenditure costs of these changes have been charged to the Reserve and do not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to pay the Christmas bonus in 1987.

Mr. Major: A Christmas bonus of £10 will be paid to people who for the week beginning 7 December are entitled to payment of one of the qualifying benefits. The special stickers for the value of the bonus will be included in some benefit books to be issued from the week after next. These will cover a 26-week period including the week beginning 7 December.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fireworks

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many shopkeepers have been prosecuted and convicted of selling fireworks to under-age children for the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: The figures for the number of convictions under the Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1986, which enable persons selling fireworks to children under the age of 16 to be tried in a magistrates' court, will be published in the early autumn. Figures for convictions under previous legislation are not available.

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to seek to amend legislation controlling fireworks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1986, which enable persons selling fireworks to children under 16 to be tried in a magistrates' court were made last summer, and similar provisions relating to persons throwing fireworks in the streets are included in the Consumer Protection Bill now going through Parliament. This legislation will need to be in place for some time before its effect can be evaluated. My Department reviews annually with the Health and Safety Executive and the firework industy the legislative and other steps needed to reduce firework injuries in the light of the accident and injury statistics and of a careful assessment of existing measures.

Companies (Purchasing Policy)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Her Majesty's Government are doing to encourage companies, in both private and public sectors to use their purchasing power to buy goods produced in the United Kingdom and at the same time assist the export potential through the achievement of a greater customer base.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Pinewood Studios

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will receive a deputation from the work force of Pinewood film studios to discuss the proposed loss of over 250 permanent jobs there; if, in the light of the redundancies at Pinewood studios and the decline in British feature film production, he will review the operation of the Films Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

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Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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